

**“Thick, Dark Strokes of Romantic Gloom and Terror”:
William Charles Piguenit’s Tasmanian Wilderness**

By

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Declaration

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Abstract

Tasmanian born artist William Charles Piguenit was a painter of landscapes in the Romantic mode. For Piguenit, nature was an inexhaustible source of primal and elemental grandeur. Whilst adhering to rules of good and correct composition in his paintings, Piguenit believed that it was the effects nature produced, most specifically those of a certain quality of light and of particular atmospheric conditions and the impression these effects had on the viewer that were paramount. Despite the fading popularity of Romanticism in Australia toward the end of the 19th century Piguenit favoured the soaring mountain views of an unpeopled sublime landscape that were the hallmarks of Romanticism. Whereas popular taste appeared to be following developments at the Heidelberg camp of artists such as Tom Roberts, Frederick McCubbin and Charles Conder, Piguenit remained steadfastly loyal to his particularly Tasmanian way of seeing and painting the landscape. Whilst Roberts and McCubbin and others were creating the sun-blasted nationalistic landscapes of the continent, Piguenit rejected the vogue toward Impressionism which the Heidelbergers tethered to the ambition of Federation of the states. Whereas the Heidelbergers employed the motif of the heroic pioneer the purpose of which was to serve as an exemplar of nation-building activity, Piguenit sought to imagine through his landscapes a kind of tear in the newly woven fabric of national community. Piguenit's landscapes, the majority of which were of Tasmania, revealed the island colony to be subject to an entirely different aesthetic, one that owed as much to its climactic temperament as much as to the literary motifs and historical discourses cast upon it. Much has been made of the character Piguenit. He is known as the father of Australian landscape painting and he is lauded as the first homegrown artist of any note. But it is the assertion that amongst other credits cast posthumously upon Piguenit, that the artist was perhaps the first artist to also be a conservationist that raises historical difficulties. Amongst these is the difficulty of the historical contingency that attends to notions of conservation, of wilderness and of modern environmentalism. In other words, it is the values given to contemporary modes of conservation and preservation and the associations between these philosophies and the notion of wilderness that create problems when used as a lens to examine Piguenit's motives a century earlier. Indeed what little traction there is to the idea that Piguenit beheld and practiced a conservation ethic is more clearly understood according to the meaning conservation held in the latter half of the nineteenth century in Tasmania. It is argued in this thesis that Piguenit and his artistry both resist a simple historical trajectory from then to now, from the artist's scenic apprehension through to a conservation ethic that held a very different place in Tasmanian society one hundred years earlier.

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Introduction

William Charles Piquenit was born on 27 August 1836 at Claremont House on the corner of Warwick and Elizabeth Streets, Hobart Town. Here William Charles and perhaps five of his siblings were born. Thereafter the young Piquenit family from 1842 occupied and rented Lansdowne Cottage, on West Hobart's Lansdowne Crescent.¹ The Piquenits would live in their West Hobart home for the next three and a half decades. It was here where William's parents Frederick Le Geyt and Mary Ann and the family would celebrate the birth of four more children and two grandchildren to eldest son Augustus Frederick and his wife in 1854 and 1857.² It is also here where the wedding of Emma Mary to John Fleming would be celebrated in 1862.³ Sadly, Lansdowne Cottage was also where the family would mourn the deaths of three boys and a girl, children to Frederick and Mary Ann; Charlotte in infancy in 1840; John Igglesden aged four in 1842, Alfred George aged 6 in 1853, and the eldest Piquenit child Augustus Fredrick aged 26 in 1860.⁴ In the midst of this turmoil William Charles in 1850 at the age of fourteen entered the civil service with the Lands and Survey Department where he worked as a trainee draftsman by day and a landscape artist by night. Piquenit had displayed a proficiency in drawing in his final year at Hobart's Cambridge House Academy where he read Euclid's *Elements of Geometry*.⁵ Piquenit remained in the civil service for 23 years. In 1872 Piquenit suddenly left what was a relatively secure albeit lowly-paid job. There remains some doubt as to the events that precipitated Piquenit's departure from the department.⁶ In all

¹ 1848 Census, CEN 1/1/88-151, Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office (TAHO).

² Colonial Tasmania Family Links: Tasmania's Heritage, available online at <<http://portal.archives.tas.gov.au/menu.aspx?detail=1&type=P&id=255351>>, last accessed 23 May 2012.

³ *Mercury* (Hobart), 30 January 1862, p. 2.

⁴ *Hobart Town Courier* (Hobart), 30 September 1842, p2; *Launceston Examiner* (Launceston), 9 July 1853, p. 5; *Launceston Examiner* (Launceston), 12 January 1860, p. 5.

⁵ *Colonial Times* (Hobart), 21 December 1849, p. 2.

⁶ Bernard Smith, *Documents on Art and Taste in Australia: the Colonial Period* (Oxford University Press, London 1975), p. 171; William Vincent Legge, *W. C. Piquenit: an Appreciation of a Tasmanian Artist*, reprinted from the *Tasmanian Mail* (TGPS, Hobart 1914).

likelihood, Piguenit was deeply offended by the refusal of a request he had made for leave, so much so that he simply abandoned his posting.⁷ Considering the fine detailed work Piguenit would have been required to perform in producing charts for the department over the years together with his determination to draw and paint in his free time, he may have feared that his eyesight could prematurely fail. After some public debate and with support coming from as far afield as the *Illustrated Sydney News* editorial pages, Piguenit eventually received in 1874 severance pay equivalent to a year's salary, or £200, for his 23 years service to the department.⁸ It seemed that Piguenit would now travel to England to correct, as it were, the mistake of history that had the artist being born on the “wrong” side of the world. However, Piguenit's passion for painting would not take him to England until much later. Instead, it was to the great forest wilderness of South-West Tasmania⁹ amidst the company of like-minded men where his search for inspiration and where the evolution of his own style would unfold.

William Charles Piguenit aspired to great things as an artist; he wished for his epitaph to proclaim that like his heroes of the Paris Commune, here lies a “knight of the palette”.¹⁰ However lofty were Piguenit's ideals, Hobart Town in the 1870s operated along considerably more conservative lines than Paris. Piguenit's father, Frederick Le Geyt Piguenit, descended from a French Huguenot family, was a common felonious criminal transported to Van Diemen's Land in 1830. Piguenit

⁷ In fact two requests according to Anthony Brown, *personal communication*, (Hobart 2012).

⁸ *Mercury* (Hobart), Thursday 17 September 1874, p. 3; *Mercury* (Hobart), 25 April 1912, p. 6.

⁹ Referring to the area, along the coast of Tasmania from Macquarie Harbour in the west to D'Entrecasteux Channel in the south-east and then inland due west from the western flank of Mount Wellington and all the country south of the A10 from Hobart to Queenstown. I will continue with this nomenclature, as opposed to “southwest” or “Southwest” (the latter favoured by Bonyhady), as it features in one of the most comprehensive surveys of all aspects of the region; *The South-West Book*, (eds.), Helen Gee and Janet Fenton (Australian Conservation Foundation, Melbourne 1978); similarly Ken Collins, *South-West Tasmania: a Natural History & Visitor's Guide* (Heritage Books, Hobart 1990).

¹⁰ Piguenit would have read “Stella's Continental Gossip” column in the *Sydney Morning Herald* as the Sydney papers became available daily to him after leaving Tasmania in early 1880; for example *The Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney), 1 September 1880, p. 7. The article relates to the lives and adventures of the Knights of the Palette, a group of bachelors who dedicated their lives to Romanticism in art not unlike the English Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Julian Bastien-Lepage, whom the article mentions was a favourite of Piguenit.

would find as a young man that especially after 1850 such close associations with convictism barred the progress of a young man in a small community such as that found in Hobart Town. Piguénit was a man carrying this and other burdens in life. His difficulty was with not only his near ancestry but that as a 'currency lad', a characterisation which Piguénit would never have tolerated, did Piguénit not lack the proper pedigree? He was not born of the Mother Country, he was himself not an immigrant either convict or free. Being born in Van Diemen's Land simply happened to him. Piguénit possessed French ancestry at a time when suspicions toward France ran very deep among Britons at home, suspicions which bordered on panic in far-flung British colonies like Van Diemen's Land. But was Piguénit not the bastard child of France, his ancestors having been forced to flee across the English Channel to escape religious persecution? Being born in Van Diemen's Land was for William Charles Piguénit a dreadful mistake, a most terrible injustice and a sobering testament to the vicissitudes of history which seemed to single him out to endure such private and personal torment.

Piguénit came to a career as an artist later in life with a moderate education and being self-taught in regards to artistry. With a convict father and with a considerable responsibility to provide for his ageing parents Piguénit would remain reliant on commissions from those men whose company he sought. Piguénit held a great affection for his parents remaining in almost constant company with them until their deaths. Piguénit had few friends. He was a small, shy, sensitive man given to bouts of nervous depression and insomnia. Later in life Piguénit displayed signs of agoraphobia. Piguénit was a lonely man, possessed of great creativity yet lacking the mental and emotional resolve to venture out into the world when the world beckoned him to do so. Outwardly, he seemed silent and mysterious and almost funereal in his

deliberations on most things. Periodic photographic portraits taken of Piguénit show a constant stern countenance, and the beard that he first acquired as a young man and that he would wear, perhaps to mask his diffident shyness, all his life. But Piguénit aspired to rise above his status as the son of a convicted felon and an unremarkable career as an assistant draughtsman. Piguénit sought the company of the learned gentlemen of the island colony. He mixed with wealthy and influential men, yet only on a superficial level. Such men were content enough to enjoy his company on occasions such as expeditions into Tasmania's South-West where his presence was required as an illustrator, but the associations seemed to end there. His art brought him into the same circles as Premiers and Attorneys General, men with tasks such as the Federation of the colonies, the introduction of self-government in Van Diemen's Land and the suspension of transportation to the colony to ponder. Yet Piguénit remained an outsider, close but never truly a part of Hobart Town's elite. Such men were content with providing charitable patronage to Piguénit, but that was all. As an artist he is mentioned alongside the likes of Tom Roberts and Frederick McCubbin, William Strutt and John Longstaff as Australian, or at least those painting in and of Australia, attaining a measure of international success. His success, occurring as it did within the context of the Federation movement, is surprising as Piguénit remained strongly, perhaps even sycophantically, attached to the European mode of landscape transcription. Piguénit spurned the Impressionistic turn of his contemporaries in the Heidelberg School and thus, or so it seems, turned his back on the Federative impulse which relied, at least in a populist sense, on the arts and literature of the times to give it momentum. On matters of art and patronage Piguénit seemed content to pontificate and judge from afar, always with the weight of the European artistic tradition at his back. But he was never a leader. Despite considerable success both commercially

and professionally Piguénit guarded his talents jealously. As an artist and as a man in life he walked alone.

Fortunately, Piguénit seems to have embraced solitude. Having met with stern coldness by those who were the gatekeepers of Hobart Town society, Piguénit expressed himself, and his sense of isolation, through his art. In modern parlance, Piguénit's otherness and his difference from the English-born men-of-rank and substance who controlled much of the enterprise and commerce in the town, led to the quiet introspection he, or rather his art, is renowned for. In the end, the oppressive atmosphere of Hobart Town which had succeeded in stifling his career as an artist for almost fifteen years, drove Piguénit to seek better opportunities and a more appreciative artistic and social community in Sydney. In Sydney's cosmopolitan atmosphere Piguénit's career flourished. In much of his work taken from subjects in New South Wales, it appears that the gloomy, reverential yet foreboding air of much of his Tasmanian oeuvre, has lifted, to be replaced by the warm, limpid glow of the sub-tropical sun. Yet, away from the cold yet stifling atmosphere of Hobart Town, Piguénit would spend the rest of his life living in small flat at the rear of his brother-in-law's home on Sydney's north shore. Piguénit became increasingly reclusive, perhaps agrophobic, to the point where much of his later work came from his memories of Tasmania or from simply looking out at the scenery below Lane Cove from the window of his small flat. He died, in July 1914, a sad and painful death.

These are some of the bare facts of Piguénit's life. This thesis considers these facts alongside what is the dominant interpretation of Piguénit's life and his art. That is that Piguénit maintained a particular love for Tasmania, especially its most wild and remote parts particularly the country in the bottom corner of the island, the South-

West wilderness, and that he was above all, a conservationist. Piguénit's artistic and perhaps almost soulful contemplation, which unquestioningly led to the sublime beauty which can be found in his Tasmanian landscapes, has remained subject to this one single dominant assessment. It is the received wisdom that Piguénit was transcribing a conservation philosophy from his mind onto the canvas before him. What is apparent but put forward less enthusiastically is that Piguénit sought to make the most of his point-of-difference and his uniqueness, being born in Tasmania, at a time when the newly-formed nation seemed caught in the thrall of Impressionism. This thesis maintains that belief. However, the connection that has been argued by others as we shall see, that Piguénit must have been a conservationist to have painted the way he did, offers surely too simple a trajectory from cause to effect to remain unchallenged. It is further considered here that Piguénit's conservation ethic as it was, and it is by no means certain that he possessed such a characteristic, would have had to have been practically and ideologically some considerable distance from a recognisable conservation ethic of today. It is for these reasons that this thesis pursues this line of enquiry in the hope of adding to rather than reorienting the discussion which circulates around this most enigmatic of Australian historical figures.

Chapter I

Knowing Piquenit: Art History or Environmental History?

Should a study of the character of Piquenit and his art be the subject of art history or environmental history? This chapter questions the pros and cons of both disciplines when applied given that much of the secondary literature related to Piquenit comes only from these two fields of historical enquiry. In relation to Australian colonial art, both disciplines begin from a shared assessment of its origins. The received wisdom is that from 1788 Europeans generally saw the Australian environment in strict scientific or Romantic terms. It is almost a cliché, such is the consistency of argument, that many early colonial artists appeared to find the Australian environment difficult to comprehend and therefore difficult to capture on canvas. Indeed, the ultimate achievement in the pantheon of Australian landscape artistry if not the inauguration of a native Australian style is deemed to have occurred once the peculiar Australian light and the true character of the ubiquitous eucalypt were eventually mastered on canvas. Yet the otherwise presumed difficulty to define an artistic fidelity with nature might as easily be read as a deliberate intention on the artist's behalf to announce a clear socio-cultural program, which was to deliver a product amenable to taste. Early colonial artistry was as much an evocation of European propensities for tidy social control as it was a mode of social didacticism. Landscape as art came into being through a power relation between a landmass and humankind's attempts to assert some control over that land. Thus, oftentimes in absence of actual control, the painted image of landscape provided a potent representation of esoteric and ideological choices.

From a scientific aspect the Australian landscape was an exotic arcadia, a New Europe, a baseline from which to mount and test theories of evolution. From the aesthetic perspective the same landscape offered a vision of the Old World grafted

onto the New, a place where existing motifs could be used to register British martial potency and human civility. If upward mobility was a distinct feature of the colonial enterprise then one clear statement of individual success in this enterprise was the allotment of acquired lands into both productive and pleasurable spheres with one sphere being for the undertaking of labour and one for the appreciation of developments such labour would bring. From the perspective of the landholder with a vested interest, identification with the land meant stamping that land with the authority of a practical form of decadence and of sound economic growth. And this authority extended into the psychic realm in that the wilderness came under the powerful guidance of European taste, refinement and order made manifest in its art. Through art the wilderness could be made to no longer gaze back at the settler with mute yet terrifying power. In this endeavour, the settlers needed to retain both a utilitarian interest in the land and a level of appreciation for the particular aesthetic pleasures of the Australian environment. Ronald Heathcote summarises writing that;

[F]rom the first days of a permanent colonising presence [the land] was subject to multiple transformations - 'wilderness' was to be cleared, cultivated and civilised. Primarily the transformation was material in productivity of crops and livestock, and aesthetic - [through] the creation of new scenery in the patterns of farmland and urban architecture, the new colours, shapes and textures of exotic, natural and man-made forms.¹

Arguably, it was this combination of the utilitarian and the aesthetic that would also distinguish class difference in the colonies and by extension would define the colonial British subject from the Englishman of Empire. In turn the pre-existing artistic landscape vision and practice imported from Europe would unselfconsciously reveal its profound social dimensions most clearly in the colonies. The social gap between those capable of grasping the cultural abstractions attendant to the aesthetic

¹ Ronald Leslie Heathcote, 'Early European Perceptions of the Australian Landscape: The First Hundred Years', in George Seddon and Mari Davis (eds.), *Man and Landscape: Towards an Ecological Vision*, Papers from a Symposium held at the Australian Academy of Science, Canberra, 30 May-2 June 1974.

appreciation of landscape art and those with more mundane concerns would become ‘a measure of social differences in the mid-nineteenth century’.² On the one hand the witness to the colonial landscape aesthetic must already have been conversant with landscape culture thus landscape loses its didactic purpose.³ But the suggestion is that nature when it is represented in the form of landscape can only be appreciated by those amenable to scenery because the whole idea of landscape is riven by class and gender delineations. In this manner landscape both real and represented through art acted as a site both for the playing out and for the articulation of differential class relations. The cultivation of an appreciation of landscape would distinguish the educated, socially mobile traveller-cum-investor from those with less opportunity to expand their horizons. This type of landscape is referred to as the “pastoral picturesque” an early colonial landscape art form that evoked strongly the notion of a harmonious middle ground between the necessity of labour and the virtue of accumulative wealth. In the Australian setting the arch exponent of this type of landscape art was John Glover. Glover’s balanced and harmonious representations of landscape replete with cultivated fields of crops, varieties of livestock, fences, roadways, paths and homesteads created what has elsewhere been called the ‘middle landscape’.⁴ Allowing for exceptions which are few and far between, for the most part the pictorial rules followed by the early colonial artists bear strong analogy to the rules, laws and practices governing behaviour in the colonies. Michael Rosenthal has succinctly put this notion of the transmission of aesthetic values into customary practice thus:

² Angela Miller, ‘Everywhere and Nowhere: The Making of the National Landscape’, *American Literary History*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Summer 1992), pp. 207-229.

³ Alan Wallach, Wadsworth’s Tower: An Episode in the History of American Landscape Vision’, *American Art*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (Autumn 1996), p. pp. 19-20.

⁴ Angela Miller, *The Empire of the Eye: Landscape Representation and American Cultural Politics, 1825-1875* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1993), p. 59.

[These] controls spread to the people. Labourers go about their business, while the artist, scion of the local gentry, can, like the landowner, oversee both the activity and its results. For this to happen effectively, everything must be governed within an authoritative regime: the artist's aesthetics, the British Constitution, the perfection of which are measured by the order and harmony in the landscape.⁵

So hegemonic was the European way of seeing the Australian landscape that it served to naturalise and normalise colonial power relations effectively erasing all prior history and legibility from the land itself.⁶ But according to Donald William Meinig, when considering an artist's interpretation of a landscape, we ought to bear in mind that there are at least nine other versions of the same scene.⁷ They are, to quote Meinig; nature (emphasising the insignificance of people); habitat (as people's adjustment to nature); artefact (reflecting people's impact on nature); system (a scientific view of interacting processes); problem (for solving through social action); wealth (in terms of property); ideology (revealing cultural values and social philosophy); history (as a record of the concrete and chronological); place (through the identity that locations have); and aesthetic (according to some artistic quality possessed).⁸ Meinig's is a useful if unfamiliar matrix.

In particular landscape as "place" brings the discussion around to the literature of human geography. The intention in this thesis is to touch on the theories of human geography lightly. Nevertheless, a readily accessible and appealing entrée to the field by someone writing with direct reference to the Australian colonial milieu is offered by Paul Carter. His task, in subjecting landscape to theories attendant to human

⁵ Michael Rosenthal, 'The Penitentiary in Paradise', in Nicholas Thomas and Dianne Losche, *Double Vision: Art Histories and Colonial Histories in the Pacific* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1999), pp. 103-130.

⁶ W. J. T. Mitchell, 'Holy Landscape: Israel, Palestine, and the American Wilderness', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Winter 2000), pp. 193-223. Although Mitchell writes with direct reference to the ongoing territorial dispute between Israel and Palestine, I have appropriated his meaning to my study of colonisation in Australia because he also adds that "the Americas, South Africa and innumerable other promised lands around the globe have mimicked this logic [divinely sanctioned conquest] with varying degrees of ferocity and religious fervour".

⁷ See Donald William Meinig and John Brinkerhoff Jackson (eds.), *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays* (Oxford University Press, New York 1979).

⁸ Meinig and Jackson, *Interpretation*, p. 128.

geography, has been to revise the subject and put it to different modes of historical interpretation which has led Carter to uncover some inventive and creative approaches that deserve mentioning. Carter has forged his own sub-discipline of history he calls spatial history that presents as an amalgam of history and human geography.⁹ Carter encourages readers to imagine the very “noise” of colonisation and in this regard goes far beyond interpretation and into imagination. To understand colonialism’s acoustic properties is to delve perhaps into the immersive qualities of the past which although seemingly lost nevertheless points to Carter’s courageous pursuit of history. Carter’s approach is not without support further afield having perhaps encouraged the historical geography fraternity to not only imagine Carter’s soundscapes but to consider ‘smellscape’ as well.¹⁰ In a similar vein Ross Gibson’s film *Camera Natura*, although produced twenty five years ago,¹¹ offers an insightful and deeply responsive text with which to approach the complexities of landscape theory.¹² Gibson’s film glides effortlessly across the vast temporal and spatial differences between early settler perceptions of the Australian environment and equally disturbing and provocative contemporary representations of Australian landscapes.¹³ Arguably Carter and Gibson remain important in terms of landscape theory more generally because of the inventiveness of their individual approaches in a field of relative sameness. Denis Cosgrove presents a more orthodox international view of the meaning of landscape taken from the human geography perspective. Among a

⁹ Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: an Essay in Spatial History* (Faber & Faber, London 1988); *The Lie of the Land* (Faber & Faber, London 1996); *Material Thinking: the Theory and Practice of Creative Research* (Melbourne University Press, Carlton 2004).

¹⁰ Alan R. H. Baker, *Geography and History: Bridging the Divide, Cambridge Studies in Historical Geography* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2003), pp. 128.

¹¹ Which arguably places *Camera Natura* in an entirely different creative and social environment given the rise to prominence of Australian cinema which began in 1979 with films such as *Mad Max* and *Gallipoli* but also in anticipation of the rise of the revisionist history of Henry Reynolds together with the Aboriginal life-writing of Sally Morgan and Oodjerroo Nunuccal and finally with the bicentenary celebration just around the corner which had Australians looking at their past with perhaps some doubt but also with some pride.

¹² *Camera Natura*, produced by John Cruthers; written and directed by Ross Gibson (1986; colour; 32 minutes; Distributor: Australian Film Commission, Sydney, Australia), offers perhaps one of the most accessible and appealing places to begin apprehending landscape theory.

¹³ Robert Rosen, “‘Camera Natura’ by John Cruthers; Ross Gibson”, *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 95, No. 4 (October 1990), pp. 1126-1128.

prolific canon his essay 'Landscape and Landschaft'¹⁴ provides novices in the field of human and historical geography and that discipline's consideration of landscape with an authoritative and conventional appraisal. Again, such an excursion this time into cultural rather than critical theory is beyond the ambit of this thesis. This thesis remains concerned with history, and so it is to art history and environmental history to which we will now turn. But mention is made here of the methods of human geography because of the effect, it is suggested here, that Tasmania's geography had on Piquenit, but also the effect other cultural representations of Tasmania had on his artistic practice. The endeavour is to take his practice out of the realm of creative abstraction and subject it to the ebbs and flows of Piquenit's life and of history, in other words, to initiate a historical enquiry into the social contexts that surrounded the artist and his artistic production.

W. C. Piquenit occupies a unique place in Australian history. He is credited with being the 'first Australian-born landscape artist of any note'¹⁵ but then some sources suggest Piquenit was simply 'Australia's first landscape painter'¹⁶ whilst others announce Piquenit to be 'Australia's' first locally-born artist of significance'.¹⁷ More than this Piquenit also wears the mantle of a conservationist. This is a view popularised by environmental historians and those writing art histories. In the field of environmental history a good comparative study between settler societies comes from Thomas R. Dunlap.¹⁸ The author is found to be particularly provocative and decidedly

¹⁴ Denis Cosgrove, 'Landscape and Landschaft', *German Historical Institute Bulletin*, No. 35 (Autumn 2004), pp. 57-71. Also very worthy of consideration is Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels (eds.), *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1988).

¹⁵ Joyce Pryse-Jones and Marjorie FitzGerald, *Piquenit, William Charles, 1836-1914: First Australian Born Landscape Artist of Any Note/A Family History* (J. Pryse-Jones and M. FitzGerald, Sydney 1992). Note that this writer was unable to locate a copy of this text as there were but 30 published with all library-held issues Australia-wide reported as lost or missing.

¹⁶ Dick Johnson, *Lake Pedder: Why a National Park Must Be Saved* (Griffen Press, Adelaide 1972), p. 10.

¹⁷ Ron Radford and Jane Hylton, *Australian Colonial Art, 1800-1900* (Art Gallery Board of South Australia, Adelaide 1995), p. 61-64.

¹⁸ Thomas R. Dunlap, *Nature and the English Diaspora: Environmental History in the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1999).

and refreshingly less scientific sounding in suggesting that ‘the darkness’ in Piguénit’s paintings is ‘emotional as well as physical’.¹⁹ Dunlap’s is an interesting perspective, that of an outsider’s view, albeit brief, on Piguénit. In their book, *Ecological Pioneers*, the authors suggest that Piguénit, ‘Australia’s first born landscape artist’ used his artistry to ‘promote a conservation message’.²⁰ *Ecological Pioneers*’ authors Mulligan and Hill cite Tim Bonyhady as having first advanced this view which they quickly adopted. More broadly, Mulligan and Hill make the assertion that it was painters, including Piguénit, who were among the first to take a less biased attitude toward indigenous Australians.²¹ Yet Piguénit never painted Aborigines in his pictures, his only concession to their very existence coming from the title of single water colour painted in 1902, *The Fisheries, River Darling (constructed by Aborigines)*. At the center of the conservationist discourse surrounding Piguénit is Tim Bonyhady. Bonyhady launched the first academic assertion that Piguénit was a conservationist in order that he, Bonyhady, might then attack his own proposition in book form and monograph.²² In one paper Bonyhady argues that Piguénit was the beneficiary of some dubious axe-work in that workers were employed to cut down native forest in order to construct an aesthetically pleasing view.²³ This somewhat *laissez-faire* approach to forest conservation does not amount to fulfilling the notion of Piguénit as a nature “lover”. Then in another instance Bonyhady maintains that Piguénit was ‘probably’ a conservationist whilst confessing that at best this assertion remained based in matters of implication rather than from direct evidence.²⁴ Bonyhady is one historian who has kept up a sustained

¹⁹ Dunlap, *Nature and the English Diaspora*, p. 102.

²⁰ Martin Mulligan and Stuart Hill, *Ecological Pioneers: A Social History of Australian Ecological Thought and Action* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2001), esp. pp.43-45.

²¹ Mulligan and Hill, *Ecological Pioneers*, p. 43.

²² Tim Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth* (Melbourne University Press, Carlton 2002); ‘Lake Pedder 1871’, *Island*, Issue 55, (Winter 1993) pp. 17-21; ‘Artists with Axes’, *Environment and History*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1995), pp. 221-240.

²³ Bonyhady, ‘Artists with Axes’, p. 225.

²⁴ Bonyhady, ‘Lake Pedder 1871’, p. 20.

attack on the notion of Piguenit-as-environmentalist albeit as a backhanded way by which to parade his hypothesis. Piguenit's famous illustration, *Crossing the Picton*²⁵ provides Bonyhady with his first opportunity to lay the accusation of man-as-noxious-weed at the feet of his quarry as the party fells a giant eucalypt in order to ford the rapids of the Picton.²⁶ Furthermore Bonyhady has suggested that it was commonplace for both photographers and artists to 'use the axe' to improve the view or to alter the aesthetic composition to make a better image and so his argument begins to lose traction here.²⁷ The point here is that the transmission of wilderness values that are purported to have emanated out of Piguenit's landscapes are arrayed around notions of the scene being one of an untrammelled, untouched and pristine wilderness. Bonyhady's voice is perhaps the loudest in chorus willing to assert that Romanticism in art equals wilderness. The strength of Bonyhady's argument, regardless of whether Piguenit swung the axe or not, is that the values inherent in Piguenit's South-West Tasmanian landscapes are potentially undermined by any suggestion that the scenes are in some way "unnatural" or false. This thesis will touch on the matter of both Piguenit's "confections" – of constructing imaginary landscapes from memory – and on the matter that Piguenit most probably embellished photographs and passed them off, silently though, as paintings. In addition, Bonyhady's is perhaps the only serious scholarly attempt to mine the character of Piguenit for signs of an environmental ethic or for any further detail at all. All others have simply followed Bonyhady's lead, his being it seems, the first and last word on the matter that Piguenit was, or was not, a conservationist. Writing from the perspective of art history, Dinah Dysart, seemingly

²⁵ In Robert Mackenzie Johnston, *Systematic Account of the Geology of Tasmania* (Government Printer, Hobart 1888), Pl. 3, facing p. 6, engraved by George Collingridge, copy held at LINC Tasmania.

²⁶ Bonyhady obtains this episode from R. M. Johnston's *Systematic Account of the Geology of Tasmania* wherein the author recounts not only the dangers of crossing the Picton with a 30 kilogram pack but also of the need to deploy the axe on regular occasions.

²⁷ In his article Bonyhady does not directly implicate Piguenit in the act of clearing the forest to allow for decent views to be taken from the Grose Valley below the camp but suggests that Piguenit may have made use of the axe-work of others by simply positioning himself in the clearings they made.

enraptured with Bonyhady's thesis, simply entitles her monograph 'William Charles Piguenit: 19th Century Environmentalist'.²⁸ Dysart's article gives a strong indication of the trajectory along which the majority of assessments of Piguenit's art travel. Written in the vein of a biography of the artist, the article also relies heavily on Piguenit's one and only contribution to conservationist discourse, *Among the Western Highlands of Tasmania* which will be discussed in greater detail later, in order to make the claim that Piguenit was a 'great adventurer' and that he must have 'enjoyed the expeditions immensely'.²⁹ These claims do not square at all with the available evidence as we shall see. Dysart in perhaps being limited for space omits to mention James Reid Scott's recollection of the 1871 expedition where he made hint to readers of *The Mercury* of Piguenit's less than robust physical condition;

The great drawback to the pleasure of such an excursion is the knapsack and having to carry everything on one's back...we found the necessary provisions quite heavy enough...Mr. Piguenit's purpose as I have said before was to transfer the scenery to canvas as well as to get the benefit of plenty of air and exercise.³⁰

Besides Bonyhady's attempts and those of his followers there are numerous other instances where the artist has been employed by those wishing to use Piguenit to fashion a history for the conservation movement. In the introduction to a collection of essays addressing what might be termed, cultural landscapes, David Trigger and Gareth Griffiths also announce Piguenit to be the first Australian landscape painter but also that his work 'became so influential in framing Australian's appreciation of wilderness'.³¹ The claim is unsubstantiated but resonates with historical import simply because, Piguenit was "there" so long ago. Others have been equally keen to seize

²⁸ Dinah Dysart, 'William Charles Piguenit: 19th Century Environmentalist', *Art and Australia*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (Winter 1992), pp. 480-487.

²⁹ Dysart, *Piguenit*, p. 485.

³⁰ 'Arthur Plains and Port Davey', *The Mercury* (Hobart), 5 April 1871, p. 2.

³¹ 'Introduction', in David Trigger and Gareth Griffiths (eds.), *Disputed Territories: Land, Culture and Identity in Settler Societies* (Hong Kong University Press, Aberdeen 2003), pp. 1-29, esp. p. 13.

upon the authority of history. Bob Brown then director of the Tasmanian Wilderness Society (TWS), in a similar manoeuvre, employed Piguénit's sketch etched by Collingridge entitled *Crossing the Picton* and Piguénit's original gouache *Lake Pedder* (Figure 1) in the book of the same name.³² Fresh from success in saving the Franklin, the TWS got behind efforts to restore Lake Pedder. By placing Piguénit in the crucible of the conservation movement almost exactly one hundred years before the inundation of Lake Pedder began, Brown extended the valorisation of wilderness values that the Lake and its loss embodied, back to a time when such associations were uncommon if not non-existent. Brown understood not only the need for a progenitor of the conservation movement but also the force which could be harnessed from a timely invocation of history.



Fig.1: W. C. Piguénit; *Camp at Lake Pedder*, 1874

Collection Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery

³² Bob Brown, Kevin Kiernan, Ralph Hope Johnstone and Elspeth Hope-Johnstone, *Lake Pedder* (Tasmanian Wilderness Society, Hobart 1986), esp. pp. 10-11.

Roslynn Haynes is another who ‘clothes Piguenit in green’, or in other words, Haynes portrays Piguenit as an early conservation pioneer.³³ Haynes is a Tasmanian academic and a graduate in both science and the humanities.³⁴ Haynes follows the same theme espousing the presence of an environmental ethic on Piguenit’s behalf that has yet to be successfully argued. Relying more on conjecture than well-rounded interpretation Haynes takes Bonyhady on his word, so to speak. Indeed in researching Piguenit the extant secondary literature invariably presents the same kind of conjectural treatment of Piguenit as Haynes exhibits. While Haynes gives equal measure in her treatment of Piguenit to Bonyhady’s thesis she nevertheless follows the well-worn argument that Piguenit’s travails in the wilderness offer a testimony which ‘gives a measure of Piguenit’s devotion to the Tasmanian wilderness’.³⁵ To Haynes, “being there” is all that mattered. Haynes unquestioningly invokes the notion that Piguenit’s habitual preference for the motifs of Romanticism is not only an essential feature of wilderness appreciation, despite the accretion of meaning such an assessment relies on, but that such pictures offer an insight into the artist’s mind. But it is not only in academic and professional fields where such an assessment of Piguenit remains popular.

To unearth more about Piguenit and his preference for Romanticism we must turn to catalogue essays written by museum curators which provide typically thorough biographical detail but which are devoid of the kind of thematic treatment akin to history. In this vein Christa Johannes and Tony Brown nevertheless employ the language of mystical wonderment at wilderness in writing what is the most

³³ Roslynn Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions: Landscapes in Writing, Art and Photography*, (Polymath Press, Sandy Bay 2006), esp. pp. 154-164.

³⁴ See the website of her publisher, Polymath, at <<http://www.polymathprofessionals.com.au/page8/page8.html>>, last accessed 5 June 2012.

³⁵ Haynes, *Visions*, pp. 154-164.

thoroughly researched biography of the artist.³⁶ On the occasion where the authors do speculate on Piguénit's thoughts pertaining to his environmental credentials they say that Piguénit's landscapes 'are above all evidence of an artist's celebration of the great natural beauty of his world...because unspoiled nature is under severe stress, its beauty touches us as perhaps never before...Piguénit's work resonates with a message to which we can all readily respond' and even more breathlessly 'Piguénit wanted to convey not only what he saw but also the feelings nature evoked in him – respect, awe and love'.³⁷ Such wistfulness is a fairly common response to Piguénit's landscapes if not a strong indicator of the kind of historical presentism which historians would ordinarily try to avoid. Piguénit is not recorded to have said these words but rather such feelings are considered "apparent" by the authors. This approach is a defining characteristic of those professionals and academics who collectively write with an understandable institutional and regional bias. It is not so much that Piguénit was undeniably a conservationist, they collectively say, but more that his proficiency in painting landscapes in the Romantic mode, which is apparent, indicates the presence of a personal triumph within Piguénit of natural beauty over efficient production which is not so clearly apparent. In other words, it is not that Piguénit was a conservationist as the term may be understood today but that he displayed, they say his art exhibits at least, the kind of affection toward nature that has become a prerequisite for modern conservationists.

If anything Piguénit was an advocate for the extraction of mineral, forest, soil and water resource usage. Nowhere else does Piguénit appear to perceive such unrealised economic potential than in the *terra incognita* of the country to the west of the settled south-east of Tasmania as we shall see later. In some measure, it can be

³⁶ Christa E. Johannes and Anthony V. Brown, *W.C. Piguénit, 1836-1914* (Beagle Press/Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart 1992).

³⁷ Johannes and Brown, *Piguénit*, p. 9.

shown that Piguénit's preference was for the preservation of natural beauty given that it could attain equal economic value, in terms of tourism potential, as with any other effort to exploit its abundance. This is clearly demonstrated in his paper *Among the Western Highlands of Tasmania* which we shall come to shortly. However, that is to make the mistake of narrowing a conservation ethic down to a simple binarism that extraction is bad and preservation is good. Furthermore tourism and wilderness are generally accepted as mutually exclusive principles at least when considering wilderness from the deep ecology end of the Green philosophical scale. It is also to ignore that Piguénit was himself a surveyor and that he accompanied into the South-West men of similar occupations and intentions, geologists and mineralogists, surveyors and explorers, hunters and track-cutters. Their purpose was not to commune with nature but to open it up to men like themselves, to extend settlement into the area, to push back the wilderness, to turn mountains into rubble, to clear old-growth forests for timber-getting, agriculture and grazing, and to dam rivers to water livestock, irrigate crops and to drive hydro-electric power generation systems. In short, Piguénit accompanied men who sought to make profit out of land that was left fallow, rivers that were let wastefully into the sea, and precious metals that were left squandered. That these men also appreciated flora and fauna as objects of study, and that they sought to lobby for legislation to correctly conserve forest resources and fauna as well does not amount to the maintenance of a wilderness preservation or anything resembling a contemporary conservation ethic at all.³⁸ Piguénit then was either there in the South-West to illustrate the arguments of these geologists and speculators, or he was there to capture the wilderness scene for posterity, aware that

³⁸ Anthony Brown, among others, is the first to cite Piguénit's friend, W. W. Legge, as having espoused a conservation ethic which probably, as Bonyhady has suggested, "rubbed off" on Piguénit. Brown drew my attention to an article in *The Mercury* where Legge mounts a very persuasive case for the preservation of old-growth timber and for afforestation with soft-wood plantations in order to meet the rapacious demand for newsprint. The extent to which this argument appealed to Piguénit is unknown. See W. V. Legge, 'The Need for Conservation': Address by Colonel Legge to the Forest League, *Mercury* (Hobart), 6 October 1913, p. 3.

advertising the South-West with his illustrations he was in effect, consigning those same scenes to inevitable destruction. This then is the central purpose of this thesis, which is to mount a challenge to the notion of Piguénit-as-conservationist.

There is, as will start to emerge, ample evidence that Piguénit was just as interested in economic development with primary resource extraction at the heart of his interest as he was in wilderness. Marxist historian Richard Flanagan has offered some criticism of Piguénit or rather how the artist has been co-opted into green political philosophies.³⁹ In particular Flanagan asks why it is that Piguénit almost entirely eliminated human beings from his purview. Flanagan argues that this amounts to an historical falsehood, a kind of “pretty lie” Piguénit perhaps told not only himself but his audience. Piguénit’s South-West wilderness, Flanagan persuasively argues, was a confection. Flanagan, in pointing to the absence of Europeans from Piguénit’s scenes, leaves the question unspoken of the absence of Aborigines. Aborigines feature in precisely none of Piguénit’s watercolours or oils. Elsewhere Flanagan has employed his Marxist analysis to open up the meaning of “environment” both temporally and physically.⁴⁰ Flanagan’s historical invocation of the lives and practices of trappers, miners and loggers in the past of Tasmania’s South-West World Heritage Area helps to broaden notions of wilderness, and in an interpretive way the concept of “environment”, to further aid its discussion. Particularly useful in this thesis is the manner in which Flanagan considers “environment” to equate to any number of situations in which, in his case study, the piners of the South-West found themselves; economic, social, political, moral

³⁹ Richard Flanagan and Cassandra Pybus, ‘Green Images’, in Pybus and Flanagan (eds.), *The Rest of the World is Watching: Tasmania and the Greens* (Pan Macmillan, Sydney 1990), pp. 157-169.

⁴⁰ Richard Flanagan, ‘Wilderness and History’, *Public History Review*, Volume I (1992), pp. 103-117; *Terrible Beauty: History of the Gordon River Country* (Penguin, Crow’s Nest 1986).

environments as well as a variety of physical environments. Indeed Tasmania's South-West is perhaps unlike anywhere else in Australia, a region where the direct influence of history has created and sustained a rich mosaic of temporal and physical environments which mount a serious challenge to the notion that "the environment" is but a setting for the degradation of ecosystems by humankind. This point will be more substantially argued as the thesis progresses. But narrating Piguénit's work within the discourse of environmentalism falls a long way short of substantiating claims that Piguénit saw the landscape the same way as do environmentalists today. Perhaps this is unsurprising as the environment movement is a progressive one with deep but amorphous historical roots. Additionally, there is a certain untidiness about the terminology of environmentalism, conservation and preservation, and wilderness that prevents the early attainment of clarity in either direction. This thesis will not get "bogged down" as it were in trying to clarify these terms. It is thought a better way to proceed is to let the historiography tell the story and hopefully shed some light on the matter. This treatment of Piguénit's art as offering an originary clarion call to the collective environmental consciousness of the last fifty years has hardly been subject to any lengthy historical examination.

Robert Hughes', although oftentimes referred to now as an art critic, *The Art of Australia* published in 1970⁴¹ stands as the major contribution made in the field by a historian. Hughes famously quipped, in reference to Piguénit's well-known affinity for precipitous mountains, that Piguénit 'liked a good crag'.⁴² For Hughes, Piguénit was a minor figure in the history of Australian colonial artistry. Christopher Allen, along with Tim Bonyhady and Ian McLean, Michael Cathcart and Paul Fox were

⁴¹ Robert Hughes, *The Art of Australia* (Penguin, Ringwood 1970).

⁴² Hughes, *Art of Australia*, p. 50.

panelists on ABC Radio National's *A Brush with Landscape* series in 1998.⁴³ Piguenit was heavily featured in this series which represents the most recent and thoroughgoing contribution to the historiography of Australian art from the field of serious art criticism.⁴⁴ The series carried with it a strong environmental message as was and still is the trend it seems when it comes to reviewing art history in Australia. Thus the responsibility of furnishing history with assessment and revision of Piguenit and his oeuvre has fallen to the likes of: Bernard Smith, Ron Radford, Anthony Brown and Christa Johannes, Dinah Dysart, John McPhee, David Hansen, and more recently and somewhat 'against the grain' John McDonald, all of whom share a background in art galleries and museums as directors, curators and trustees.

Beginning with the art history of Bernard Smith most commentators have favoured a thematic treatment which combines art and nature, or perhaps rather art and land, as the dominant themes in all of Australian art. Smith synthesises explorer's journals, the sea charts of navigators and the sketch art of seamen to great effect in his seminal work *European Vision and the South Pacific*. This book is an unsurpassed and superlative example of the art history-environmental history nexus if there is one.⁴⁵ Smith, whose voluminous work on Australian art began in 1945 adjudges Piguenit to have been in possession of a 'great and intrepid love of the infinite' and contrarily of Piguenit speaking with the 'voice of a bushman'.⁴⁶ Smith like others after him finds support for this last notion in *Among the Western Highlands of Tasmania* which is fitting given the title of Smith's edited collection.

This over-reliance on a single piece of evidence is unfortunate as some major flaws

⁴³ *A Brush with Landscape*, 3 part series hosted by Julie Copeland, originally broadcast in August 1998 on ABC Radio National's Sunday Special program.

⁴⁴ Christopher Allen, *Art in Australia: from Colonisation to Postmodernism* (Thames & Hudson, London 1997).

⁴⁵ Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific* (Oxford University Press, Melbourne 1989), and *Imagining the Pacific: in the Wake of the Cook Voyages* (Melbourne University Press, Carlton 1992).

⁴⁶ Bernard Smith (ed.), *Documents on Art and Taste in Australia: the Colonial Period, 1770-1914* (Oxford University Press, Oxford 1975), but also, *Australian Painting, 1788-1960* (Oxford University Press, Melbourne 1962); *European Vision and the South Pacific, 1768-1850* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1960), *Place, Taste and Tradition: a Study of Australian Art Since 1788* (Ure Smith, Sydney 1945).

exist with the document which will be discussed later. Elsewhere Smith gives Piquenit little attention. Ian McLean, although having produced little on Piquenit, has nevertheless published widely on Australian art history, mostly in the shortened monograph form.⁴⁷ Throughout, McLean has remained aware of the kinds of difficulties presented to the historian of images particularly the impermanence of the artist's thoughts and the factual unreliability of the images they have left behind. McLean suggests that it is the image itself, which forms the most dubious part of the historical record, but yet the same image can also reveal ideologies of the times, at work. Compare, as Ian McLean has, the artistry of convict artists Thomas Watling and Joseph Lycett both painting in and around Sydney Cove between 1790 and 1820. In the space of a mere 30 years, Watling's sublimity and sensitive ethnography is replaced by Lycett's Europeanised picturesque. This is an essential and identifiable characteristic of colonial praxis.⁴⁸ The very real emptying of the landscape of its natural inhabitants was matched by an iconological removal, as in the art itself, of all emblematic, symbolic, ritualistic and traditional meaning from the land in order to suggest private meanings could be imposed upon the landscape by a settler society. This is not to say that art ought to be accepted uncritically as if the personal mannerisms of an artist ought not be subject to more thorough interrogation or worse that such mannerisms are put forward as suggestive of the entire complex of the art-society nexus. McLean acknowledges that for the historian the treatment of art as historical evidence may attract widespread criticisms beyond simple matters of

⁴⁷ Ian McLean, 'Landscape and Ideology: Picturing Sydney Cove 200 Years Ago', in David Samuel Trigger and Gareth Griffiths (eds.), *Disputed Territories: Land, Culture and Identity in Settler Societies* (Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong 2003), pp. 109-130; 'Under Saturn: Melancholy and the Colonial Imagination', in Nicholas Thomas and Diane Losche (eds.), *Double Vision: Art Histories and Colonial Histories in the Pacific* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1999), pp. 131-162; *White Aborigines: Identity Politics in Australian Art* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998); *Paradise Lost: Tasmanian Prints, Regionalism, Modernity* (Print Council of Australia, Melbourne 1989).

⁴⁸ Bryan Wolf, 'All the World's a Code: Art and Ideology in Nineteenth-Century American Painting', *Art Journal*, Vol. 44, No. 4, American Art (Winter 1984), pp. 328-337, esp. p. 330.

differences of methodology.⁴⁹ Critics of McLean's approach might point to the panoply of theories attendant to landscape art. Among them Stuart Hall's "reception theory", Erwin Panofsky's iconology, Benedict Anderson's "imagined communities", or John Berger's "ways of seeing"; all would furnish another mode of enquiry into the semiotics of art beyond what is needed here. Perhaps to conclude before a lengthy excursion into critical theory is unnecessarily attempted, John Berger has diagnosed the problem McLean touches on and which thesis cannot treat with any greater vocation. To quote Berger;

[T]he more imaginative the work, the more we can understand the artist... . Unfortunately, when images from the past are presented as works of art, their meanings are obscured, or mystified, by learnt assumptions such as beauty, truth, form etc. Our understanding of history will always change as we change. However, this cultural mystification results both in making the images seem more remote, and allows us to draw fewer conclusions from history.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ McLean, 'Landscape and Ideology', *passim*.

⁵⁰ John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (Penguin, London 1972), p. 11.

II On 19th Century Conservationism

Before embarking on the main argument it is necessary to outline some basic theoretical considerations. Aesthetic responses to the environment can be seen to give some indication as to the level of actual physical change, usually degradation, of the Australian environment. Aesthetic responses to the environment across time can also be seen to provide an index of social, political and economic progression amongst people, communities, nations. Indeed the historical, aesthetic and artistic, cultural and moral value of the environment necessarily sees human efforts to harmonise the natural and built environments come within the ambit of not only environmental history but other kinds of history and other kinds of responses to the environment such as legislation and politics. Most historians would date the emergence of environmental history to the late 1960s and would say its place of origin was the United States.¹ The key theme of environmental history remains that of anthropogenic ecological change; that is the measurement of human impacts upon various ecosystems and the visible signs of this in different environments across time. Environmental history began as an enquiry into the limits of anthropogenic expansion and the litmus test of this expansion was the presence, degraded or otherwise, of local ecosystems. As any scientist would readily comprehend such an enquiry would be best begun with the establishment of a “control” sample, a methodological year zero. Environmental history needed to begin from the moment when the natural balance and order of things in place for millennia was suddenly upset. The New World territories of the colonial empires provided the necessary virginal baselines from

¹ Key scholars in the field and their most recent contributions include J. Donald Hughes, *An Environmental History of the World: Humankind's Changing Role in the Community of Life*, 2nd Edition (Routledge, Abingdon 2009); Carolyn Merchant, *American Environmental History: an Introduction* (Columbia University Press, New York 2007); Samuel P. Hays, *Explorations in Environmental History: Essays* (University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 1998). Hays is credited with having written the first environmental history text in 1959, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement, 1890-1920*.

which the environmental impacts of anthropogenic expansion could be scientifically observed and historically reported.² Colonies like Australia were, it could be argued based on the abundance of ancient floral and faunal samples, places where the balance between man and nature was always held in tension. Environmental history would prove beyond doubt that that tension remained in balance until the arrival of Europeans. In turn, this would give substance to theories of ecology, specifically that ecosystems were self-contained self-sustaining microcosms which when pierced by human intrusion lost some or all of their contents, thus upsetting their balance ultimately leading to environmental change. By producing the New World as the stable baseline from which to make these observations and assessments colonisation was in this way seen as a contest between a debased humanity and the environment, and of these two as the only parties to the colonial encounter.³ In the hands of Australian scholars this approach had until relatively recently idealised Aboriginal societies as always having trodden lightly on the earth; “they” were part of the ecology, part of the environment itself. Tom Griffiths along with Libby Robin⁴ and Tim Flannery⁵ have provided some measure of historical corrective to this kind of historical myopia as they collectively argue that traditional Aboriginal hunting practices can be theoretically linked to the extinction of Australian megafauna. But when Robin and Griffiths stated that ‘Aboriginal history is environmental history, and vice-versa’, their efforts were well-intentioned but disingenuous.⁶ When recently retired Greens Party leader and senator and once director of the Tasmanian

² Libby Robin and Tom Griffiths, ‘Environmental History in Australasia’, *Environment and History*, 10, No. 4 (2004), pp. 439-474, esp. 448.

³ “The unique aspect of the Australian colonial experience was that there were two great protagonists, the settlers and the very land itself”. See Maxwell Harris, ‘Introduction’, in Maxwell Harris and Alison Forbes, *The Land That Waited* (Lansdowne, Melbourne 1967), pp. 1-2.

⁴ See ‘Introduction’, in Tom Griffiths and Libby Robin (eds.), *Ecology and Empire: Environmental History of Settler Societies* (Keele University Press, Edinburgh 1997).

⁵ Tim Flannery, *The Future Eaters: an Ecological History of the Australasian Lands and People* (Reed Books, Chatswood 1994).

⁶ Robin and Griffiths, ‘Environmental History’, p. 456.

Wilderness Society Dr. Bob Brown expressed a view that there have been environmentalists in Australia ‘forever’ and that ‘the Australians of the millennia before 1788 were part of the environment’ his intention was to similarly underline the deleterious effect colonisation had had upon the Australian environment.⁷ On one hand their comments underline what is a distinct temporal cleavage within the discipline of environmental history which will now be described.

All of the anthropogenic change that has occurred since humans became the dominant species and all of the change that has occurred since Europeans launched both the Industrial Age and the conquests of the New Worlds are treated in environmental history as quite distinct and separate phenomena.⁸ This has led to the perception that Aboriginal peoples were and in some cases still are the consummate environmentalists, despite scientific counter-claims as to the fate of Australian megafauna as already indicated. This has not prevented environmental groups from making much from the self-perceived corollary between their own conservationist/preservationist strategies and the harmonious, demonstrable sustainability of Aboriginal productive practices.⁹ Historically, very little of this self-proclaimed affinity has flowed in the other direction, from Aborigines to conservationists. Again, this phenomena forms part of the history of South-West Tasmania. Jim Everett was one of the Aboriginal activists throughout the Franklin campaign in the early 1980s.

⁷ Bob Brown, ‘Greening the Conservation Movement’, in Drew Hutton (ed.), *Green Politics in Australia: Working Towards a Peaceful, Sustainable & Achievable Future* (Angus & Robertson, Sydney 1987), pp. 34-48, esp. p. 41. But in rendering Aborigines as ‘natural’ environmentalists and naturalising Aboriginal relationships to land, Brown too unfortunately consigned Aborigines to a discursive past. Bob Brown is a man who I respect immensely. His integrity and passion for fairness and equality are immeasurable.

⁸ Tom Griffiths describes this as the difference between geological-scale and human-scale histories, the former being the realm of the scientist, the latter that of the historian. See Tom Griffiths, ‘The Humanities and an Environmentally sustainable Australia’, *Australian Humanities Review*, Issue 43 (December 2007), available online at <<http://www.australianhumanitiesreview.org/archive/Issue-December-2007/EcoHumanities/EcoGriffiths.html>>, last accessed 18 April 2012.

⁹ Mitchell Rolls, ‘Black is not Green’, *Australian Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1, Summer (2003), pp. 41-65, esp. p. 48. But if Aborigines hunted the megafauna to extinction then an argument can be mounted for continuation of similar hunting practices to be maintained as perpetuation of Aboriginal culture even in those areas designated today as parks and world heritage areas. This is a constant source of ongoing tension between environmentalists and Aborigines living on traditional lands. Given that some of the areas returned to Aborigines under Native Title is also given national park status within the boundaries of which firearms are banned, Aborigines are sometimes forced to use more rudimentary methods to kill game (such as stoning turtles to death) which in turn raises the ire of the wider population.

Everett has been unequivocal in his opinion of the Wilderness Society's conduct throughout the campaign. Everett states that throughout the campaign the Tasmanian Wilderness Society consistently either refused to support Aboriginal land rights, or opposed the notion altogether. According to Everett "their" view had always been that unless Aborigines gave certain assurances that land practices would not include mining, logging, woodchipping or other damaging industrial activity, they could not support Aboriginal land rights.¹⁰ Everett says:

During the 'Battle To Save The Franklin' the 'wilderness mob' continually wanted to push Aboriginal issues to the back and keep conservation alone up front such that when recognition of Aborigines was eventually conceded it wasn't living Aborigines being considered, it was past Aboriginal heritage.¹¹

Whilst the contemporary interests of the battle's chief protagonist, the Tasmanian Wilderness Society (TWS) were towards preservation of the South-West wilderness area as a storehouse of biological diversity or a "gymnasium" for the indulgence of eco-tourist pursuits or as a "cathedral" for the practice of communing with nature, the interest of Aborigines were expressed largely in terms of cultural heritage.¹² The observation by scientists of archaeological debris in Fraser Cave (later, Kuta-Kina) changed the discourse of the Franklin campaign from the mere eco-centric chatter of boffins to an issue of international significance that would re-write the history of humankind itself. Kuta-Kina proved that Aboriginal occupancy was contiguous from some 40,000 years prior to colonisation and that far from being "washed away by the tides of history" Aboriginal use of the land was ongoing, although enduring an extended hiatus. The eventual saving of the Franklin River and the inclusion of the

¹⁰ Jim Everett, 'Significance to Tasmanian Aborigines', in Steven John Smith and Maxwell Robert Banks (eds.), *Tasmanian Wilderness: World Heritage Values* (Royal Society of Tasmania, Hobart 1993), p. 158.

¹¹ Everett, 'Significance to Tasmanian Aborigines', p. 158.

¹² William Godfrey-Smith, 'The Value of Wilderness', *Environmental Ethics*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (1979), pp. 309-319.

South-West wilderness on the World Heritage list was lauded as a land rights victory, of sorts. For Aboriginal Tasmanians, victory meant the archaeological preservation of Aboriginal culture whereas for the TWS World Heritage listing of the South-West wilderness was recognition of land rights for the world and more importantly had taken the issue beyond state and federal politics and onto the UNESCO charter in recognition of the areas human heritage value. But on the other hand for Aboriginal Tasmanians victory also meant disaster. For living Aboriginal Tasmanians, it seemed that their authentic culture had become an artefact, their true identity a relic. What remained of them remained in the wilderness. And what they are today came to be the subject of discourse and conjecture, of rhetoric and argument. In response in 1993, the Wilderness Society adopted a Code of Management of Wilderness Areas. Section 2.3 (a) reads: ‘Aboriginal...traditional owners will be involved in planning recreation access, and interpretation of cultural heritage’.¹³ Contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal identity is in this manner inscribed as an associative space, where Aborigines may become partners, participants and stake-holders in tracts of land that legally belong to them. In some cases, perhaps more so interstate than in Tasmania, Aboriginal pasts have become a tourist object tied to heritage sites, categorised as of archaeological significance.

Much environmental history of Australia is informed by scientific enquiry.¹⁴ But environmental history can be used to enforce and argue a range of views extending from the antiquity of Indigenous occupation of the Australian continent to casting doubt on the supposed environmental ethic of Aboriginal groups to a rebuttal of western perceptions of pristine, un-altered wilderness to substantiating claims for

¹³ The Wilderness Society, ‘Code of Management for Wilderness Areas’, available from The Wilderness Society online at <<http://www.wilderness.org.au/about/policies/wildmgmt.html>> last accessed 2 August 2005.

¹⁴ Norman B. Tindale, ‘Ecology of Primitive Aboriginal Man in Australia’, in Allen Keast, Robert Crocker and Clifford Christian (eds.), *Biogeography and Ecology in Australia* (Junk, The Hague 1959), pp. 36-68; Flannery, *The Future Eaters*, op cit; Stephen Pyne, *Burning Bush: A Fire History Of Australia* (Holt, New York 1992).

an innate Aboriginal environmental ethic. The impacts then of environmental history upon Australian society and its institutions are considerable. For example, the notion of Aborigines as conservationists relies on arguments that are based, to some degree, in the palaeoecological evidence of anthropogenic fire. Lingered debate persists over theories of Aboriginal agency in extinction of megafauna and the proclivity or otherwise of Aboriginal fire-stick farming.¹⁵ Nevertheless the practice of Aboriginal fire-stick farming now holds a prominent place in settler-colonial historiography having made its way out of environmental history and into the realm of identity politics where such ancient practices have become central to contemporary definitions of Aboriginality. In respect to Aboriginal native title, it is the ongoing application of ancient practices such as fire-stick farming by Aboriginal people that provides a demonstrable link between pre-colonial and post-colonial Aboriginality.¹⁶ Rhys Jones made the problematic assertion that ‘the first European observers of Aboriginal communities were ‘undoubtedly confused and fascinated’ by the minimalist technologies Aboriginal peoples employed and the seemingly arbitrary nature of their modes of production.’¹⁷ Just as problematic is the assertion made by Head that ‘until recently’ Aboriginal hunter-gatherer productive practices have been rendered ‘relatively invisible’ if not erased from the settler-colonial historical record.¹⁸ Both Jones’ and Head’s comments could be read in a number of ways. But by emphasising

¹⁵ Marcia Langton, *Burning Questions: Emerging Environmental Issues for Indigenous Peoples in Northern Australia* (Northern Territory University, Darwin 1998), p. 11.

¹⁶ Tasmania as yet, has no form of Aboriginal land tenure which acknowledges traditional ownership, previous occupation or enduring cultural significance of Tasmanian land to Aboriginal Tasmanians. There is no legislative acknowledgment of Aboriginal Tasmanians’ inherent links with their ancestors, their land or their living cultural heritage. Instead, under the Aboriginal Lands Act 1995 (Tasmania) land with cultural (archaeological) significance has been handed back to be administered by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Land Council (TALC); a statutory body. This represents the Tasmanian government’s ‘minimal response’ to the federal government’s Native Title Act 1993 (Commonwealth). It also demonstrates the extent to which ‘unbroken tenure’ as in the case of the Meriam people in the Mabo No. 2 decision, constituted a situation which far exceeded the minimum requirements of native title. Therefore, Mabo gives us little indication of how courts will act in respect of Aboriginal claims to land under state and territory-based legislation.

¹⁷ See Rhys Jones, ‘Hunters of the Dreaming: Some Ideational, Economic and Ecological Parameters of the Australian Aboriginal Production System’, in Douglas Yen and J. M. J. Mummery (eds.), *Pacific Production Systems: Approaches to Economic Prehistory, Occasional Papers in Prehistory* (ANU, Canberra 1990), pp. 25-53.

¹⁸ Lesley Head, ‘Unearthing Prehistoric Cultural Landscapes: A View from Australia’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, New Series, Vol. 18, No. 4 (1993), pp. 481-499, esp. p. 482.

the distinction between the environmental happenstance of Aboriginal hunter-gatherer modes of production and the damaging effects of settler-colonial agriculture, the disjunction of a before and after colonial moment is emphasized, and thus becomes a “blitzkrieg” moment. This moment as such establishes that much-needed baseline of before and after colonisation, even if the environment that the first Europeans saw was one that had been significantly altered by Aborigines and was not a true wilderness. This has led to some virulent attacks upon the scientific bias of environmental history. Simon Cubitt for one argues that scientific research continues to reduce wilderness to a moral and political instrumentality that justifies the notion of exclusion of ‘human-as-noxious-weed’ from wild areas.¹⁹ On one hand, such science tends to deny settler-colonial extractive relationships with wild areas, sanguinely juxtaposing this with Aboriginal relationships with country, by posing Aborigines as those who trod lightly thus offering today what is thought to be the ultimate model of sustainability, conservation and preservation. In effect what has happened is that the scientific view has produced a past-oriented discourse on wilderness and Aboriginality that locks Aborigines into idealised roles in regard resource extraction. Whilst science provides environmental history with evidence of settler-colonial cause and effect, culturally the same bifurcation of the past into the deep past and the post-colonial present offers a different perspective on the use of the environment.

In order to read environmental history it becomes necessary to adopt the term ‘environment’ as if it carries an already-understood meaning. Most frequently it is a term employed to describe the biophysical non-human realm of nature as if humans ought to be considered separate from it. The environment is the site where humans

¹⁹ Simon Cubitt, 'The Wilderness World Heritage Area and Tasmanian Conservation Values: Scientific Internationalism and the Way We See Ourselves', unpublished manuscript, as cited in Peter Hay, *The Politics of Tasmania's World Heritage Area: Contesting the Democratic Subject*, available online from the University of Tasmania at <<http://www.geol.utas.edu.au/geography/staff/prhay/WHADEMO.htm>>, p. 5, last accessed 12 December 2011.

create ecological change. But environment is a term that creates a great deal of conceptual confusion because of the cultural, political, even emotional significance attached to it.²⁰ Robin and Griffiths rather pointedly suggest that ‘the bush is “environment”, but the city is not’.²¹ This might seem a helpful distinction initially. They alert their readers to the emerging notion of proximal and distant human geographies that is the difference between the local and the remote. However, the simplicity of this binary obscures the complexity of what underlies it. Legislators in Australia have been similarly troubled by what is meant by “environment” settling at Commonwealth level, because the states cannot agree, for a definition which includes ‘all aspects of the surroundings of man, whether affecting him as an individual or in his social groupings’.²² When governments legislate on the environment by necessity all aspects of what might be considered “environment” need to be taken into account, not just the non-human element typically meaning ecosystems. Resource legislation, conservation legislation and planning and protection legislation have multitudinous effects on whole communities. However, the subsequent endeavours of these communities to again harmonise the natural and built environments to produce sustainable outcomes provide further indication that “environment” is made up of local and remote landscapes, natural and urban environs, imagined and real environments, and the political, social, moral and economic conditions which attend each of these, across time. An indication of this comes from the fact that environmental history is made up of a number of sub-disciplines as mentioned

²⁰ Paul E. Little, ‘Environments and Environmentalisms in Anthropological Research: facing a New Millennium’, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 28 (1999), pp. 253-284, esp. p. 254.

²¹ Robin and Griffiths, ‘Environmental History in Australasia’, p. 454.

²² Commonwealth Environment Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act, 1974 in Gerry Bates, *Environmental Law in Australia*, 3rd Edition (Butterworth’s, North Ryde 1992), pp. 1-6, esp. p. 2.

before.²³ J. Donald Hughes had this to say about the pitfalls of environmental historians delving too deeply into other disciplines;

If this enquiry [environmental history] is to remain history rather than philosophy, it should never stray too far from the question of the attitudes and concepts that affect human actions in regard to natural phenomena.²⁴

On the other hand Stephen Dovers is another who acknowledges not only the challenges faced by environmental history as a maturing discipline but also of the need for it to articulate its message to policy-makers.²⁵ For Dovers environmental history recounts the interaction of history itself with policy, community action and attainment of social licence to do or not do things to the environment. This is an important point. To only ever see environmental history as a litany of ecological change is to perhaps underestimate the discipline's potential. To treat all environmental history as the story of an ancient battle between labour and capital and all of it as further examples of a rich and powerful oligarchy operating out of the reach of law and reason, is to limit such an enquiry to an unchallenged but widely accepted preconception that the rich and powerful always have their way and that all humanity is predominantly characterised as a white, male, European middle-class exploiter of the land.²⁶ Perhaps nowhere is this more apparent than in the history of Tasmania's South-West. The historiography of the South-West region offers a panoply of environmental and conservationist philosophies and strategies played out

²³ In a historical sense archaeologists, foresters, geographers, geologists conducted surveys of "new lands" to report on the viability of settling these areas deemed terra incognita. See also Donald Worster, *Transformations of the Earth: Toward an Agroecological Perspective in History*, *The Journal of American History*, Volume 76, Issue 4 (March 1990), pp. 1087-1106.

²⁴ Hughes, *What is Environmental History?*, p. 11

²⁵ See Stephen Dovers, 'Still Unsettling Australia: Landscapes and Institutions', *Proceedings of the Australian Academy of Science Fenner Conference on the Environment*, Canberra, 2-5 May 1999, pp. 145-152.

²⁶ Jillian Koshin's paper, through the lens of the Lake Pedder controversy, touches on the need to widen the enquiry of environmental history to consider other evidence more common to the social historian. See Jillian Koshin, *Shifting Visions: Developmentalism and Environmentalism in Australian History*, available online at <http://3A%2F%2Fwww.nla.gov.au%2Fopenpublish%2Findex.php%2Faustrian-studies%2Farticle%2FviewPDFInterstitial%2F2226%2F2640&ei=gs5_T7ySHIS3rAfO0jUBQ&usg=AFQjCNGXLmshxllIGJ3xrNUIWtLbUON4fAQ&sig2=ILgKFayUE_j9XOCP8D5w6g&cad=rja>, last accessed 7 April 2012.

against the backdrop of political intransigence and the unfettered power of the Hydro Electric Commission and the powerful forestry industry. Furthermore, looking back in deep time, the very notion of wilderness, the touchstone of the conservation movement, comes under the severest examination when it is considered that Aboriginal occupation of the South-West follows a seasonal migration pattern measured in tens of thousands of years. Marcia Langton argues that the prevailing notion of wilderness held by environmental groups amounts to a re-inscription of *terra nullius*.²⁷ Langton asserts that such science fictions wear against Aboriginal desires for economic self-sufficiency to which access to land and natural resources is crucial.²⁸ Jim Everett, as we have seen, encountered the effects of these discriminatory beliefs first-hand.

Environmental history does however make explicit use of concepts derived from historical ecology. The fundamental concept of an ecological system or “ecosystem” revolves around the notion of a closed loop system maintaining its own regularities in a state of dynamic equilibrium. An ecosystem then seems to be a bubble waiting to be pierced by an unnatural incursion. This makes ecosystems symbols of normal stability and the forces that upset that stability as unnatural alien entities. This also means that ecosystems offer simplistic models with which to demonstrate the impact of colonialism in Australia. Historical ecology is then the study of that process across time of ecological change from stable natural processes to rapid and unpredictable ones. However an ecosystem and an environment are not collapsible their meaning. This though has not prevented the likes of Alfred Crosby,

²⁷ Langton, *Burning Questions*, p. 9.

²⁸ In 1991, the Royal Commission Into Aboriginal Deaths In Custody (RCIADIC) delivered its final report. The report stated that ‘as an underlying cause in the high rates of detention and deaths in custody...the question of land may not at first sight appear to be of immediate significance and yet the many dimensions of the land issue repeatedly emerge both as direct and indirect factors’; Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, *Understanding Country: The Importance of Land and Sea in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Societies* (Australian Government Printing Service, Canberra 1994), p. 27.

William Cronon and Donald Worster, considered to be environmental history pioneers, from employing historical ecology narratives when writing environmental history. For example Crosby's *The Colombian Exchange* first published in 1972²⁹ showed that European conquest of the Americas in the 15th century was more than a military, political and religious process since it involved a massive biological invasion by a European portmanteau of humans, mammals, organisms and pathogens.³⁰ Crosby argued that this portmanteau performed like the forward party of the European invasion, laying waste to the Indian First Nations peoples and much of the native flora and fauna. For Cronon³¹ and Worster³² ecosystems, or ecological systems whatever is the preferred terminology, offer sites for the contrasting of two different environments, the first that created by the natural mosaics formed by uninterrupted ecosystems and limited human interaction, and the second, an environment which is the result of Marxist modes of production involving the sudden and catastrophic harnessing of these natural mosaics for the purpose of creating surplus productions. Both use the lessons, they say, that can be learned from this kind of history to make predictions or indeed issue warnings about the global ecological future. What then is the difference between historical ecology and environmental history?

An environmental narrative is defined in the Encyclopedia of World

Environmental History as:

[An] account that describes either the physical characteristics and natural history of a place, or its transformation over time.³³

²⁹ Alfred W. Crosby, *The Colombian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Greenwood, Westport 1972).

³⁰ For the condensed version see Alfred W. Crosby, 'Ecological Imperialism: the Overseas Migration of Western Europeans as a Biological Phenomenon', *Texas Quarterly*, Volume 21, 1978, pp. 103-117.

³¹ See most recently William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists and the Ecology of New England* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York 2011).

³² See Donald Worster, *The Wealth of Nature: Environmental History and the Ecological Imagination* (Oxford University Press, New York 1993).

³³ *Encyclopedia of World Environmental History*, Volume I, A-E (Routledge, New York 2004), p. 454.

The place of ecological systems in environmental history is as an index for determining the pace of change and the nature of that change. Ecosystems are not the sole object of study of environmental history. Unlike environments, ecosystems could not be said to capture the imaginative and physical reactions of humankind when initiating or responding to those changes. Cronon and Worster separately but commonly use historical ecology to make ecological judgements on the past or predictions for the future, usually of dire consequences, to offer their audience some ecological challenges if not to their historical preconceptions, then to their practices in the future. It is in this manner that histories that focus heavily on historical ecologies remain set in a distinctly deep past-oriented discourse whilst environmental histories are, more often than not, set in a future-oriented one. For Cronon and Worster and others environmental history is urban history because “environment” is a void of natural elements, ecosystems, therefore environment is unnatural. But ecological change is but one index by which the environmental historian might set about narrating the change or transformation in this tract of land, or that continent. What the environmental historian can also do is examine the interchange between humans and their environment through the lens of culture. And this is where art becomes a focus of environmental history. Rather than being just another shred of evidence by which to measure ecological change, landscape art can be seen in and of itself as a measure of attitudinal change. For the purposes proposed here, attitudes are all important as we unravel, to just a small degree, the meanings of wilderness, conservation and environment and how these meanings have changed over time. For some, “landscape” both in its real physical form, and its represented form, is the product of those interchanges between humans and ecologies. Landscape is a

particularly appropriate object of study in the field of environmental history as it, landscape, deals with nature and culture combined.

Occurring alongside the emergence of the new sub-discipline in the United States in the late 1960s was the rise of environmentalism. What then is “environmentalism”? By the 1960s “quality of life” issues superseded the theme of efficient management of natural resources that was the predominant mode of interaction between humans and ecological systems. People were becoming more concerned with the health effects caused by polluted air and water and could point to the failure and laxity of existing environmental legislation. Prior to the 1960s, the 19th century belief prevailed that through the practice of efficient production, society’s expansion would avoid reaching its limits. The notion of exhausting the forests, rivers and mineral deposits could be defeated, it was thought, by harnessing the vast and unlimited potential of technology, science and economies of scale. Thus the term “conservation” arose to describe this phenomenon whereby natural abundance could be maintained indefinitely through sensible management and not solely preservation of natural resources. However, seemingly inexhaustible resources particularly water in rivers that might otherwise make its way from catchments to the sea were deplored by conservationists as wasteful. The seemingly inexhaustible potential of water to produce of hydro-electricity seemed to present a guilt-edged opportunity to couple technology, science and good governance together to fulfil the promise of a boundless industrial future.³⁴ Similarly, the idea of sustained forest yields under a carefully managed quota system seemed the ideal panacea to unregulated and unsustainable wholesale clearances. But beyond the concept of conservation as the carefully controlled extraction of natural resources there existed a latent preservation

³⁴ This was the mantra being repeated time and again by the Hydro and a sympathetic Reece government in Tasmania.

perspective. What ought to be preserved, it was thought, was a tract of land as it was prior to the arrival of Europeans; wilderness.

Environmental historians commonly place a great deal of significance in the idea of wilderness. Wilderness has become a place where natural systems and biotic relationships have to be legally protected from human impacts. There is a strong reliance of the term ‘wilderness’ upon scientific quantification. This has reinforced a view that environmentalism stands as a concern only for boffins and experts and not for people more concerned with their daily needs than the welfare of the planet.³⁵ Furthermore, a scientific evaluation of wilderness tends to reduce all previous human activity to the monolith of human heritage whereupon all subtlety and diversity is lost. The problem with wilderness is that it is a cultural construct that has only more recently been mobilised for political ends to mean, land untouched by humans. As such landscapes termed wildernesses are especially problematic for Aboriginal peoples in that they deny an Aboriginal heritage of land management practices in these areas. In a similar way then notion of wilderness is problematic for settlers and their descendants in that their white, ancestral, historical presences in these places are fashioned as exploitative incursions. Richard Flanagan has pointed out that the notion of pristine wilderness areas as unaltered by human intervention is:

[A]n erroneous view, unsupported by the historical record, but equally, it is one perpetuated by the dominance of science in presenting and interpreting wilderness, from the 19th century up until the present day.³⁶

In response to Flanagan’s critique of scientific evaluation of wilderness, Peter Hay argues that environmental groups, in general, do not hold the same scientific view.

³⁵ Martin Mulligan, ‘*Re-Enchanting Conservation Work: Reflections on the Australian Experience*’, *Environmental Values*, 10 (2001), pp. 19-25.

³⁶ Richard Flanagan, ‘Wilderness and History’, in Steven John Smith and Maxwell Robert Banks (eds.), *Tasmanian Wilderness: World Heritage Values* (Royal Society of Tasmania, Hobart 1993), pp. 9-15, esp. p. 11.

Although Flanagan disagrees, Hay argues, surely as an environmentalist himself, that the wild lands in the South-West not far from his own back door in Tasmania, are patently not social creations in the way that ‘the button-grass plains and the dry eucalypt forests of the east are’.³⁷ Where Flanagan acknowledges that the South West World Heritage Area has a history of human involvement ‘going back tens of thousands of years’³⁸ Hay, like his nineteenth-century predecessors is still looking for modifications, for measurable improvements on nature, for quantifiable signs of human activity to start the clock counting, as it were. Does it need mentioning that environmentalism is a social phenomenon and that the first Green political party in the world, the United Tasmania Group, emerged from the desperate politics which took place in South-West Tasmania from the early 1960s until early 1973? Although environmental history has, as mentioned, its origins in late 1960s America, it is considered here that scholarship in the field has advanced significantly in this country that Australian scholarship ought to be consulted. Environmental history here in Australia has stiffened the divide between deep-time archaeological environmental investigations and the immediate environmental aftermath of the initiation of the colonial moment in Australia. Furthermore, as Langton says, the designation of Aboriginal land as wilderness assigns the notion of a cultured landscape, of Aboriginal country, to discourses of the past. Although her scholarship is quite often polemical, Langton provides a legitimate commentary on what lies beneath the seemingly egalitarian ethos of environmentalism. Lesley Head suggests that a past-oriented discourse on Aborigines has naturalised Aboriginal relationships with natural resources to the point where ‘they’ are rendered ‘indivisible from nature’.³⁹ Head

³⁷ Peter Hay, *Main Currents in Western Environmental Thought* (UNSW, Sydney 2002), p. 22.

³⁸ Flanagan, ‘Wilderness and History’, p. 10.

³⁹ Lesley Head, *Second Nature: the History and Implications of Australia as Aboriginal Landscape* (Syracuse University, Syracuse 2000), p. 155.

argues that whilst this view serves settler-colonial-descended Australia's interests, it also posits Aborigines as associates to the interests of environmental groups; 'they' are the 'consummate environmentalists'.⁴⁰ Whilst Tim Flannery and Tom Griffiths have cast doubt over the assertion that all Aborigines fit the mould of human ancestors who trod lightly on the Earth, Aboriginal Tasmanians remain less than enthusiastic when it comes to rejecting such a stereotype.⁴¹

Bill Gammage has posed perhaps the most important question that post-colonial Australian environmental history could probably ask up to this point. Gammage has queried both what the Australian landscape would have looked like without human intervention at all and what the land actually looked like at the initiation of colonialism.⁴² For Gammage shows that the answer to the first question lies outside of historiography and within the limits of enquiry struck by anthropology and archaeology. This reliance on research originating outside of doctrinaire history has been identified as one of the key characteristics of environmental history since its inception.⁴³ People other than historians are also writing environmental history for a variety of purposes and audiences. Although the focus of environmental history may be on producing historical surveys to inform and influence current and future environmental planning and policy decisions, people other than historians dominate the field. Although Gammage's book underlines this point his answer to the second question lies not in scientific enquiry, but in the history of colonial art. For those seeking to make a scientific enquiry into Australia's past environments there is a

⁴⁰ Lesley Head, 'Conservation and Aboriginal Land Rights: When Green is not Black', *Australian Natural History*, Vol. 23, No. 6 (1990), p. 448-454, esp. p. 450.

⁴¹ Referring to Aboriginal Tasmanian elder Jim Everett's Earth Mother spirituality. See Jim Everett, 'Letter to the Editor', *Mercury*, (Hobart), 8 January 2005, p. 20. Everett expressed the same Earth Mother philosophy in 2000. See Jim Everett, 'Aboriginality in Tasmania', *Siglo*, Iss 12, Summer (2000), pp. 2-6.

⁴² Bill Gammage, 'Plain Facts: Tasmania Under Aboriginal Management', *Landscape Research*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (April 2008), pp. 241-254. See also Gammage, *The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines Made Australia* (Allen & Unwin, Sydney 2011).

⁴³ Libby Robin and Tom Griffiths, 'Environmental History in Australasia', available online from the Centre for Environmental History at <http://ceh.environmentalhistory-au-nz.org/wp-content/uploads/Environmental_History_in_Australasia_2004/pdf>, last accessed 7 April 2012.

certain attraction to the slice-of-time perspective offered by landscape art throughout the colonial period. As an historical document though a landscape painting is typically an unreliable confection, a kind of visual amalgam of disparate physical locations on one hand and a kind of visual mnemonic of what society thought of itself at the moment of the artist's production on the other. And this is of course the case even without considering the Marxian dynamic between artist and patron. Perhaps as Gammage seems to suggest it is the unintentional consequences of moments where the artist's attention is drawn more towards thematic treatment rather than topographic accuracy that landscape art can be seen to be a transcription directly from human attitudes toward nature.⁴⁴ A case in point would be found in John Glover's landscapes and the difference between the relatively accurate representations of flora and fauna found in his pastoral picturesque landscapes, and the sinuous forms of his eucalypts and Aborigines in his Arcadian dream-like ones. Of course the opposite can be true in that the artist's idealism presents the historian with a further task, that is to determine the veracity of the evidence and to ask the question; just what exactly did the artist see?⁴⁵ Perhaps this doubt is what led environmental historian Geoffrey Bolton to avoid including art in his Australian environmental history thesis.⁴⁶ Yet the appeal of landscape art as enabling a dialogue with the past means that art history can properly co-exist alongside historical ecology within the field of environmental

⁴⁴ Gammage, 'Plain Facts', pp.243-244. John Glover, who Gammage cites probably because of Glover's prolificacy does indeed provide an interesting example to the environmental historian, his sinuous eucalypts and other Arcadian motifs in particular are a puzzle.

⁴⁵ Paul Paffen discusses Glover's King's Island, 1831 a sketch in which Glover depicts convicts in the act of chopping down a tree. Paffen states that Glover never stepped foot on the island and there never was a convict settlement there. Instead Glover recorded an idea, although the topographic information transmitted in Glover's "inventive" sketch could be considered a relatively accurate depiction of what Glover observed of the landscape from offshore. See Paul Paffen, 'Forgotten Faces? Portraits and Other Images of the Convict in Van Diemen's Land', *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (June 1999), pp. 57-95.

⁴⁶ Such was his distrust of art as evidence. See Geoffrey Bolton, 'The Historian as Artist and Interpreter of the Environment', reprinted from *Man and Landscape in Australia* (Canberra, 1974), pp. 113-124, esp. p. 117. I note that the cover of Bolton's *Spoils and Spoilers: a History of Australians Shaping Their Environment*, 2nd Edition (Allen & Unwin, North Sydney 1992) features a triptych titled *The Pioneers*, 1990 a revisionist parody of Frederick McCubbin's famous and beloved *The Pioneer*, 1904.

history. Tim Bonyhady⁴⁷ has, as a means of substantiating his environmental arguments, employed art as an embellishment to textual accounts of the responses of the first colonists toward their environment. For Bonyhady it is in the moments where text and image combine that an art history/environmental history nexus is formed. When historians wish to examine the historical record to interpret how the Australian environment affected colonial settlement and vice versa it is often toward the colonial artists they turn to substantiate their environmental determinist claims. Eric Rolls' *Visions of Australia: Impressions of the Landscape, 1642-1910* is more than 300 pages of explorers' journals and captains' logs, yet despite its title features just 16 plates of painted landscapes of which only a few are in colour.⁴⁸ Indeed Rolls' evidence of logs and journals of men like Watkin Tench⁴⁹ toward Australia's unique environment is a narrative of discovery rather than environmental history but still offers a good example of the text/image art history/environmental history nexus. Yet Rolls effectively establishes that European settlement altered the manner in which the represented landscape, that is in both textual and visual form, sustained a progressive narrative from discovery to settlement. Rolls, although writing environmental history⁵⁰ and therefore providing some cross-fertilisation between that discipline and art history, is not alone in this approach in historicising what the first colonists saw by placing images alongside words. Piguenit's landscapes are among the first such example of where art meets science in order to convey an impression of the total environment to the reader.

⁴⁷ Bonyhady, *Images*, op cit.

⁴⁸ Eric Rolls, *Visions of Australia: Impressions of the Landscape, 1642-1910* (Lothian Books, South Melbourne 2002).

⁴⁹ Tim Flannery (ed.), *1788: Comprising a Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay and a Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson, by Watkin Tench* (Text Publishing, Melbourne 1996).

⁵⁰ Eric Rolls, *They All Ran Wild: the Story of Pests on the Land in Australia* (Angus & Robertson, Sydney 1969); *A Million Wild Acres: 200 Years of Man and an Australian Forest* (T. Nelson, Melbourne 1981).

Inasmuch as science is an enquiry into what was knowable about the natural world, Piguenit's illustrations were not it seems the actions of the artist railing against rationalism or against the privations exacted upon the land by primary industry. Piguenit's artistic illustrations were to provide an affective bridge between bare scientific facts such as those presented by the surveyor and the experience of scenic apprehension. What Piguenit's illustrations were doing was adding to the substantive argument presented by the scientific rationalist appraisal of land. Piguenit was visually describing just another aspect of the "total" environment of the South-West. His was a representation of the aesthetics of the area and as such provided the reader with a picture of the cultural environment as an adjunct to the scientific and economic appraisals of the surveyors, men like James Reid Scott and Charles Percy Sprent. On the occasion of the expeditions in 1871 and 1875 that Piguenit participated in, the surveys involved taking into account every aspect of the environment from the daily activities of the settlers in a given area to the accessibility to education for children to the provisions of routes of communication; roads, rivers and sea ports.⁵¹ Whereas Piguenit's landscapes have been treated as evocations of a wilderness it is less conjectural to suggest that in fact Piguenit was showing prospective settlers and investors what the country that held all of this economic potential looked like. The reason Piguenit left out human beings in any capacity is that they, simply, were not there. In some way this might explain Piguenit's affection for realism; he wished to convey as empirically as possible the exact detail of the surrounding country without obfuscating the fact that this country needed settlement. This thesis will in due course move on to a necessary and closer examination of Piguenit's art. But the initial suggestion being made here is that Piguenit's illustrations assisted governments and

⁵¹ James Reid Scott, 'Port Davey in 1875', *Mercury*, 21 September 1875, p. 2.

individuals to imagine living and working in the South-West of Tasmania. We must remember that Piguenit was documenting some of the first recorded glimpses of that country. In order for would-be settlers to become enticed and for governments to be persuaded, the “total” environment needed to be described. Piguenit’s illustrations were an invaluable tool in this endeavour.

This approach to environmental history as offering much more than a litany of ecological disasters and dire predictions, in other words a discipline in which the environment becomes both product and sum of human interactions with ecological systems, is neither new nor without its adherents. In the introduction to his recent book on the subject of environmental history, J. Donald Hughes asks a number of highly provocative questions in regard the pursuit of environmental history.⁵² The trouble it seems according to Hughes is that ‘historians should see’, but have not it is supposed, ‘all human events within the context where they really happen, and that is the entire natural environment’.⁵³ This, it seems, is a disingenuous manoeuvre because it seems to situate all history within the limits of enquiry established by the sub-discipline. In other words, it might be supposed that all human activity has resulted in some measure of ecological change, and that the record of that activity and its effects is environmental history. The point here is that Hughes is suggesting that “the environment” ought not only be considered as a product of interactions between humans and non-human systems, but rather “environment” is the place where those interactions occur. Environment is both product and sum of human interactions with ecosystems. Perhaps in considering Hughes position the environment can be seen to influence such interactions directly producing historical outcomes that might

⁵² J. Donald Hughes, *What is Environmental History?* (Polity Press, Cambridge 2006).

⁵³ Hughes, *Environmental History?*, pp. 11-12.

otherwise have been different. From there it is just a matter of the scale. This influence and its effects are called, when considered as a collective coherent phenomenon, “environmental determinism”.

One of the more widely-read examples of an environmental determinist argument found in an environmental history is Jared Diamond’s *Guns, Germs and Steel* originally published in 1967 and re-released with a similar title with far greater success in 1998.⁵⁴ Diamond argues that the differences between human societies that paved the way for one culture to conquer another were the result of environmental differences but on a continental scale. For Diamond natural environments have shaped human behaviour as much as the reverse is true and that technological superiority one peoples to another based in responses to those environments is what created dominance in one human population which led to subjugation of another. The theme of subjugation is a strong one throughout Australian history. Published between 2004 and 2009 were James Boyce’s *Van Diemen’s Land*, Hamish Maxwell-Stewart’s *Closing Hell’s Gates*, Paul Collins’ *Hell’s Gates: the Terrible Journey of Alexander Pearce, Van Diemen’s Land Cannibal*. These titles might be considered environmental histories, of sorts. This is because the human geographies created by the island’s landscapes together with its brutal convict past hold a very prominent if not intractable place in the most recent interpretations of the island’s colonial past. Particularly in the case of Hell’s Gates in Macquarie Harbour, it is specifically that environment which bastardised those imprisoned there to the point of the most horrific transgressions as Maxwell-Stuart and Collins ably demonstrate. Other examples of environmental determinism abound in the telling of Australian national history in Robert Hughes’ *Fatal Shore* and Geoffrey Blainey’s *The Tyranny of*

⁵⁴ Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fate of Human Societies* (Vintage, London 1967).

Distance: How Distance Shaped Australia's History both of which approach their respective histories as inevitable outflows of the antipodean environment in terms of its remoteness, and otherness, from the imperial centre. In another fashion Henry Reynolds continues, in his albeit highly thematic treatment of Australian history, to place land at the very heart of matters both historical and contemporary.⁵⁵ Reynolds' evocation of the colonial frontier as an interstitial space for the negotiation of settler and Aboriginal identities and relations has been significant enough to have altered the direction of the legal administration of land under Australian law. In some regard it seems that a great deal of Australian history might be considered environmental history but only if the term "environment" is considered outside of its narrow interpretation as a political and moral instrumentality, as a "thing" created by interactions between humans and ecological systems rather than a stage for the playing out of those interactions. Although none of the above texts deal with ecological change they all posit the environment, that is the aspect of land, as a central theme. Without the particularities of the Australian environment they argue, the historical outcome would have been decidedly different. It seems reasonable to assume that had Piguenit grown to maturity elsewhere, his art would undoubtedly be different too.

⁵⁵ Henry Reynolds, (ed.), *Aborigines and Settlers: the Australian Experience, 1788–1939* (Cassell, Stanmore 1972); *The Other Side of the Frontier: Aboriginal Resistance to the European Invasion of Australia* (UNSW Press, Sydney 1981); *Frontier: Aborigines, Settlers and Land* (Allen & Unwin, Sydney 1987); *The Law Of The Land* (Penguin, Ringwood 1987); *Dispossession: Black Australia and White Invaders* (Allen & Unwin, Sydney 1989); *With the White People* (Penguin, Ringwood 1990); *Fate of a Free People* (Ringwood, Penguin 1995); *Aboriginal Sovereignty: Reflections on Race, State and Nation* (Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards 1996); *This Whispering in Our Hearts* (Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards 1998); *Why Weren't We Told?* (Viking, Ringwood 1999); *Black Pioneers* (Penguin, Ringwood 2000); *An Indelible Stain? The Question of Genocide in Australia's History* (Viking, Ringwood 2001); *North of Capricorn: the Untold Story of Australia's North* (Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest 2003).

III

Piguenit – Nature Lover or Conservation Pioneer?

Local Tasmania bushwalking enthusiast Jessie Luckman once suggested that ‘the dramatic paintings of Lake St. Clair and Mt. Olympus made by William Charles Piquenit were far ahead of their time in the way they emphasised the grandeur of an unspoiled wilderness area’.¹ Here, in a subtle but influential way, Piquenit had been adopted by the conservation movement as an environmentalist, a man motivated to preserve the wilderness areas of South-West Tasmania from development. Piquenit was first claimed as a conservationist by members of the Hobart Walking Club (HWC) including Jessie Luckman, established in 1929, in the 1950s.² Theirs was more a recognition of the artist’s travails under difficult conditions, heavy rucksack and bulky camera equipment in tow, than of any explicit acknowledgement of Piquenit’s ethics. It is this commitment with Piquenit having made several excursions into Tasmania’s South-West that offers testimony to the proposition and nothing more. It is a matter of suggestion rather than fact. But the key to understanding why the HWC would seek a champion of conservation values in Piquenit lies in knowing the politics of South-West Tasmania a subject which has already been touched on.

In a submission to the National Parks and Wildlife Service members of the HWC including Jessie Luckman argued that natural beauty ought to be considered to hold an amenity that was comparable to other forms of extractive economic value such as mineral deposits or forest resources. This meant that environments that exhibited aesthetic qualities ought also to be considered as a resource and therefore subject to legislation and funding arrangements for their “wise-use” management. The outdoor recreation movement, which spawned organisations such as the HWC,

¹ The Hobart Walking Club (HWC), ‘History of the Park Area’, in *First Draft of a Management Plan for the Cradle Mountain – Lake St. Clair National Park* (Hobart 1977), pp. 9-11.

² HWC, ‘History of the Park Area’, p. 9.

sought to enjoy the environment in a way that did not necessarily supersede the efficiencies of current natural resource management practices but be given equal weight when bargaining with government. Concern for the quality and amenity of the non-urban environment meant that in its highest form beautiful and aesthetically-pleasing natural features were, by exclusion because of the absence of resource extraction, equivalent to nature unmodified. The term best suited to describe such natural scenery is “wilderness”. The term is a value-laden one. It is entirely beyond the scope of this work to tease apart the sediment of meaning, both scientific and philosophical, that has accrued around the word since biblical times. Perhaps a better place to start is with the conservation movement, the movement which places wilderness preservation at the centre of its philosophies and politics. In the late 1960s, the conservation movement still considered resource extraction as an essential outcome of its conservation praxis. Yet a newly emergent environment movement which had its genesis around the mid-1970s and which followed in the wake of the academic discipline of environmental history, increasingly began to see the quality of nature and the aesthetics of an environment unaltered by traditional resource economics – wilderness – as having a higher almost spiritual value that transcended resource economics. But unlike environmental groups the HWC was not beholden to upholding the value of wilderness on the basis of philosophical argument alone. The HWC exhibited much closer ties to 19th century conservation ethic. The HWC and other outdoor recreation groups considered the unlikely scenario that an effective management plan for Tasmania’s South-West could ‘develop and conserve natural resources’ whilst preserving the ‘fauna, flora and natural scenery’ found in the area.³ And this is where the link with Piguenit was forged. Groups such as the HWC from

³ Jessie Luckman, ‘Some Notes on the South-West Committee’, 1966, Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office (TAHO).

the 1950s understood Piguénit's conservation ethic to have embraced resource extraction and not to condemn and deride it. But the emergence of Piguénit in the midst of the South-West management plan debate was by no means a case of simple opportunism; Piguénit's association with Tasmania's South-West is part of the lore of that country. His association with conservation in Tasmania comes more from his enthusiasm for outdoor recreation and for the wise-use method of natural resource management than a vague hope for the preservation of pure, unadulterated wilderness.

In 1885 pastoralist Robert Crelin Kermode forwarded an account of an expedition he undertook walking out from the west coast of Tasmania to Hobart in which he mentions "Piguénit's View". Kermode remarks that the peak was 'over 1000 feet high' and located to the south west of Gentle Annie'.⁴ Across the River Derwent from Hobart a small knoll in the foothills of Mount Direction near Otago Bay was popularly referred to amongst outdoor recreationists in the early 1900s as "Piguénit's Lookout".⁵ Piguénit took several sketches and painted the view of Hobart *en plein air* from there. In 1956 members of the HWC met to discuss the dedication of a 700 metre high conical hill on the northern slopes of Mount Hopetoun in Tasmania's South-West wilderness.⁶ In November 1956 the Nomenclature Board gazetted the previously officially unnamed peak, Mount Piguénit. Twenty five years later in May of 1981 an otherwise forgotten tributary of the Gordon River received a

⁴ R. C. Kermode, 'On Foot Through the West of Tasmania', *Mercury* (Hobart), 4 April 1885, supplement, p. 2. Kermode was climbing Gentle Annie, known officially as Mount Anne, adjacent to what he and a handful of other outdoor enthusiasts called Piguénit's View.

⁵ *Mercury*, 20 December 1910, p. 2.

⁶ In Thwaites' letter he wrote that he had 'suggested that a peak in the Arthur Range be named after B. W. C. Piguénit' (sic) and that his [Thwaites'] desire was to gain recognition of Piguénit because his visits to remote parts of the state. See Jack Thwaites, 'Correspondence', NS3208/1/1, Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office. At a meeting of the Hobart Walking Club's Nomenclature sub-committee on 18 April 1956 the Thwaites' motion was moved and seconded "that the early Tasmanian surveyor-artist J. Piguénit (sic) be honoured by naming the conical hill on the north slope of Mt. Hopetoun after him". See Hobart Walking Club, series NS158 'Correspondence', item 1 'Nomenclature Sub-committee', Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office. The request was granted by the Tasmanian Government Nomenclature Board on 15 November 1956, *Tasmanian Government Gazette*, 21 November 1956.

similar epithet, that of Piguénit Rivulet.⁷ On this occasion the commendation was made to the Nomenclature Board by members of the Tasmanian Wilderness Society. A little less than twelve months later in July 1982 and just a short paddle downstream, members of the Tasmanian Wilderness Society (TWS, pronounced *Twiz*) were preparing to mount the largest civil disobedience action in Australia's history.⁸ The "Battle to Save the Franklin" had begun. Little had changed so it seemed since the mid 1950s. Again it was the unrestrained power of the Hydro Electric Commission, established in 1940, pitted against the seemingly insignificant interests of an elitist cohort of nature enthusiasts. Since 1953 the Hydro Electric Commission (Hydro or HEC) had been monitoring river flows in the region to establish the viability of hydro-electric power generation. In 1955 when the proposal for a scenic reserve at Lake Pedder was discussed by the Scenery Preservation Board, a statutory body, Sir Allan Knight, Hydro Electric Commissioner who was also on Scenery Preservation Board (SPB) pointed out that there were long term plans for hydro-electric power development in the Lake Pedder area.⁹ The SPB had been formed in 1915, a year after Piguénit's death, as in some regard an acknowledgement of the attention the artist had attracted to the state's South-West. The board was comprised of nine members including the parliamentary secretary for the departments of Lands, the Public Works Department, the Tourist and Immigration Department, the Forestry and Police Departments and three members each from the Royal Society, the Tasmanian Field Naturalist's Club and the Hobart Walking Club.¹⁰ At its first meeting and shortly after tabling and reading of the act which brought the SPB into existence

⁷ *Tasmanian Government Gazette*, 27 May 1981, p. 1284.

⁸ Stefan Petrow, 'Saving Tasmania? The Anti-Transportation and Franklin River Campaigns', *Tasmanian Historical Studies*, Volume 14 (2009), pp. 107-136.

⁹ J. G. Mosley, address given to conservation seminar of the Australian Conservation Foundation, Canberra, 28 June 1970, TAHO.

¹⁰ Scenery Preservation Act, 1915 (6 Geo. V No. 15), amended in 1921 and then 1938 to include the Hobart Walking Club as having a mandatory constituency on the board.

committee member and district surveyor C. S. Wilson moved a motion to ‘instruct land surveyors when affecting surveys of Crown Land to take special note of waterfalls, forest-clad mountain gorges, conspicuous rocky outcrops, attractive and commanding viewpoints or other places of historical or scenic interest and natural beauty’.¹¹ It was clear that the SPB was not established to oversee the management of national parks and scenic reserves but rather to make representations to the Minister of Lands to whom the surveyors of unalienated lands would report. With knowledge of the probability of a hydro-electric power development scheme some time in the future, the proposal was nevertheless passed unimpeded by the board and in late 1955 a scenic reserve of some 24,000 hectares was established in the environs of Lake Pedder. By 1972, the Hydro had its way as Lake Pedder was flooded under the waters of the Huon-Serpentine impoundment. On that occasion the South-West Committee, formed in 1962 from ‘a variety of clubs and organisations members of which were concerned with outdoor activities and the conservation and preservation of native flora and fauna’¹² including members of the HWC had stood alone against the statutory power of the Hydro. A lack of political will on its behalf and the triumph of intransigence on behalf of the Hydro saw the creation of a massive scheme of earthen and concrete dams in the heart of a national park. Out of the ashes of the failed campaign to save Lake Pedder arose the world’s first environmental political party, the United Tasmania Group. Although Lake Pedder was lost, by 1982 what had begun as an uncoordinated movement of outdoor recreation groups like the HWC and the South-West Committee (SWC), had become a determined and resolute conservation movement spearheaded by the TWS determined to use every possible manoeuvre to stop the Hydro from triumphing this time.

¹¹ ‘Minutes of the 1st Meeting of the Scenery Preservation Board’, 7 June 1916, Item AA264/1/1, TAHO.

¹² Luckman, *Notes on the SWC*, op cit.

South-West Tasmania..... Australia's Heritage

WOULD YOU DESTROY IT?



**If history is a guide, Tasmania's Parliament will
Another Gordon dam would be regretted for decades**

Fig: 2 Franklin River, South-West Tasmania

Image courtesy Sydney Morning Herald/Tasmanian Wilderness Society

The conservationists did indeed triumph when in early 1983 the Commonwealth government exercised its constitutional powers against those of the state of Tasmania to stop the building of the Gordon-Below-Franklin Dam.¹³ Amongst the weaponry TWS had used to wage its highly effective and successful anti-dam publicity campaign in 1983 were a series of wilderness images (Figure 2). Without making any explicit reference to the existence of an historical contiguity between the two, the sublime landscapes of William Charles Piguenit painted a century earlier had suddenly appeared from the vaults of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery to offer the considerable weight of history to the conservationists campaign.¹⁴ During the campaign conservation groups such as the TWS and the Australian Conservation

¹³ Environmental matters, since the passing of the Commonwealth Constitution Act in 1900, have remained a matter of shared and cooperative responsibility between federal and state governments. However, the Battle for the Franklin tested this arrangement, which was found to provide inadequate environmental protection in this case. To paraphrase the justices of the High Court of Australia who found in July 1983; that matters on which the Commonwealth is empowered to legislate are listed in s 51 of the Constitution, and in the event that Commonwealth legislation made in pursuance of s 51 by an Commonwealth executive 'head of power' (eg: external affairs, corporations and "people of any race" powers) conflicts with existing or future State legislation, commonwealth legislation will prevail. See Gerry Bates, *Environmental Law in Australia*, 3rd Edition (Butterworth's, Sydney 1992), pp. 52-53.

¹⁴ Some of the Piquenit monochromes had been archived at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery. See Tim Bonyhady, 'Lake Pedder 1871', *Island*, Issue 55 (Winter 1993), pp. 17-21.

Foundation spent enormous sums of money running full-page advertisements in the nation's newspapers invoking not only Piguénit's wilderness sublime imagery (Figures 3 and 4) but also stealthily invoking history to great effect in its own representations.



Fig. 3: W. C. Piguénit, *The Upper Nepean*, 1889

Image courtesy Art Gallery of New South Wales

Piguénit's paintings had earlier appeared in the seminal conservation publication *The South-West Book*¹⁵ in 1978. This publication more than any other represents the first such occasion where the conservation movement would officially and publically adopt Piguénit as conservationist. Again this manoeuvre was a matter of implication and association rather than fact. Again in 1985 in Bob Brown's *Lake Pedder*¹⁶ as we have already seen Piguénit's sketches and drawings provide the entrée to what is essentially a plea to restore the Lake but which is also both a conservationist recruitment brochure and a Green political manifesto. Whilst remaining a truly beautiful publication with many magnificent photographs of the unmolested Lake

¹⁵ Helen Gee and Janet Fenton (eds.), *The South-West Book: a Tasmanian Wilderness* (Australian Conservation Foundation, Melbourne 1978).

¹⁶ Bob Brown, et al, *Lake Pedder*, passim.

Lake Pedder in its narrative exhibits all the hallmarks what Tony Hughes-Daeth would describe as ‘the literary form that promotes stylised conflicts between the very good and the very evil’.¹⁷ That form, says Hughes-Daeth, is melodrama.

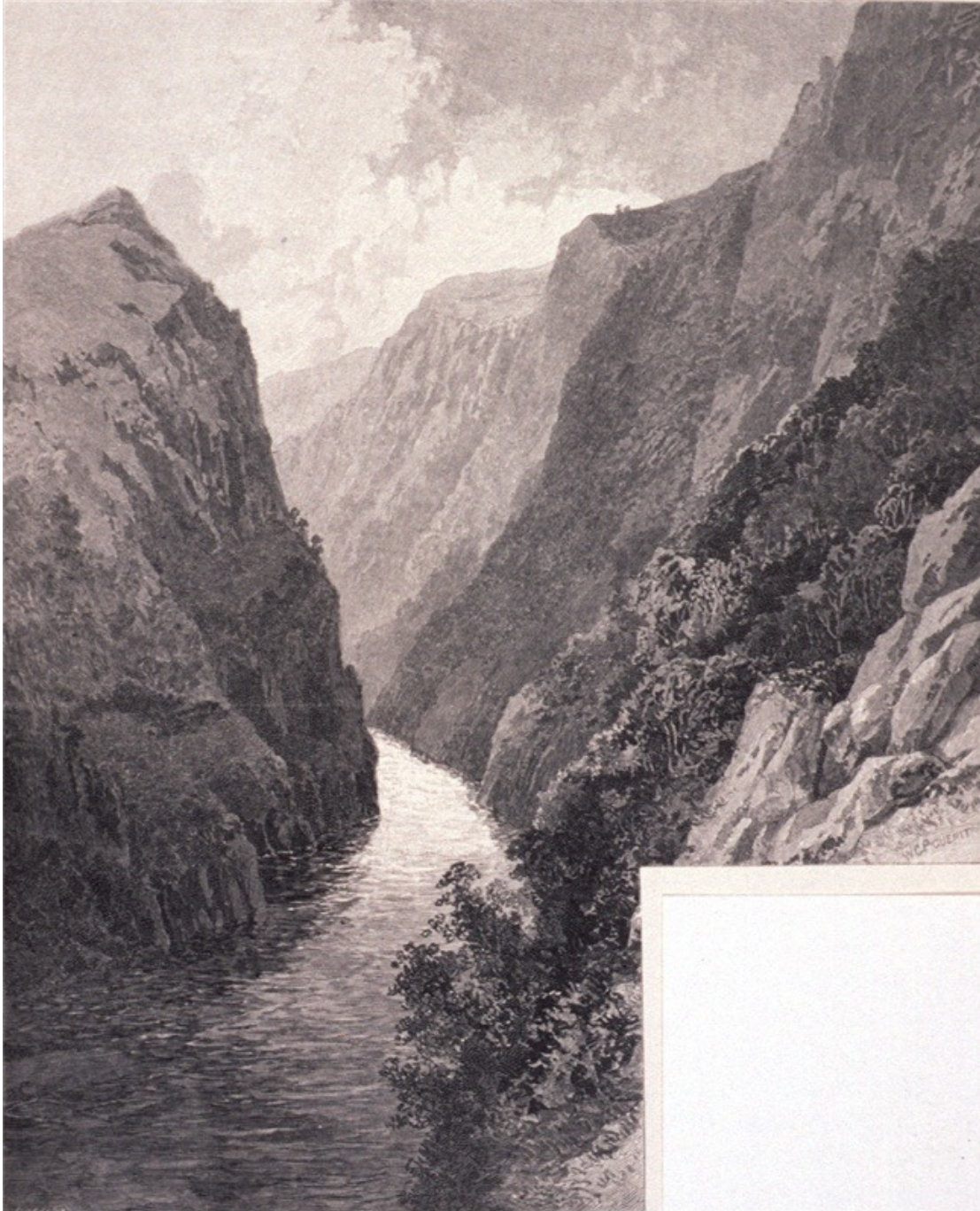


Fig. 4: H. Miller, engraving after W. C. Piguenit; *Hell's Gates, Davey River*, 1871

Image courtesy LINC Tasmania

¹⁷ Tony Hughes-Daeth, 'Australian Writing, Deep Ecology and Julia Leigh's "The Hunter"', *Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature*, Volume 1 (2002), pp. 19-31.

On both occasions the associations between Piguénit and conservationism were explicit if not in their individual discourses then in the palpable associations made between Tasmania's South-West wilderness, and Lake Pedder in particular, and Piguénit's art. This "marriage" was consummated most recently at the Senses of Place conference held in Hobart at the University of Tasmania's School of Fine Art in 2006. Accompanying the conference was an exhibition of wilderness photographs and paintings, the catalogue essay of which opens with Piguénit's *The Arthur Range* (1871) and a note stating that the track Piguénit must have taken to reach the summit of Scott's Peak in order to capture the vista 'is now submerged because the HEC flooded Lake Pedder'.¹⁸ It is this regard that the historical figure of Piguénit is embraced as a conservation pioneer a man offering 19th century wisdom for a late twentieth-century cause. Piguénit became the silent and noble witness to the inexorable march of history; his art testimony to the beauty which had been lost to corporate greed, or so it seems.

But it is this kind of simplistic rationale based in the assertion that Piguénit was exercising a conservation ethic, or that at the least he recognised the spiritual value of wilderness where others might not have, and, which holds the protection of wilderness as its central tenet that seems to lack substance. There is no shortage of commentators willing to assert and support the notion as already shown and there exists a plethora of circumstantial evidence to support the charge. Only there is no evidence upon which to base the assertion. Piguénit left nothing pertaining to a personally held conservation ethic or discourse. His paintings are here subjected to an alternative reading based not in wistful assertions but in what is known about the man himself. What claims can be made as to Piguénit's attitude to conservation must be

¹⁸ Jonathan Holmes, *Senses of Place: Art in Tasmania, 1970-2005*, catalogue essay (University of Tasmania, Hobart 2006).

examined in light of both what conservation meant in late-nineteenth century Tasmania and also the evidence at hand as to the presence of such an attitude.

Piguenit's images were mobilised to make an unmistakeable clarion call-to-arms for environmentalists, a call it seemed from through the ages originally made by Piguénit. More than that this imagery expanded the campaign during the Franklin debate giving it widespread appeal amongst ordinary Tasmanians whilst making the issues at stake seem less a matter for an elitist few but more a matter of commonsense values of simply placing beauty before progress. This was the point to be exact where the last remnants of 19th century conservation were extinguished. The Battle to Save the Franklin was the first instance where "nature for its own sake" was pitted against the welfare and wellbeing of the people who sought to continue to extract a measure of wealth and sustenance from the area's abundance of natural resources. Tasmanian-born Piguénit had been a surveyor, emboldened with the task of carving up parcels of land for sale on the basis of their wealth of natural resources. Now, by the association of his paintings with the Battle to Save the Franklin and wilderness more generally, he was adopted as a conservation pioneer; he was suddenly on the "other side". Piguénit, it was thought or perhaps rather hoped, "knew" in the 1870s what environmentalists knew 100 years later and that was that the South-West wilderness ought to be preserved for ever. No more evidence for this assertion could be presented other than a single paper Piguénit had written and a body of work in which nature remained a storehouse of Romantic inspiration but which only in the latter part of the 20th century became associated with the preservation of wilderness.

The inference is that Piguénit saw the landscape as environmentalists do today, that Piguénit saw a wilderness in Tasmania's South-West that ought to be preserved, that Piguénit was a conservation pioneer. This thesis challenges this

notion. Beyond conservation matters Piguénit has been the subject of study of both art historians and environmental historians. As already suggested environmental histories often turn to landscape art and artists as supplementary evidence to support a scientific hypothesis. Colonial artistry offers a conventional baseline of empirical evidence “the landscape looked like this before Europeans came” so to speak.

Piguénit and his art offer no exception to this rule as his travels in search of natural sublimity took him into some of the remotest landscapes of all the colonies. Indeed, the South-West of Tasmania had been subject to the seasonal migration patterns¹⁹ of Aboriginal peoples for several millennia, but these migrations had been suspended approximately 10,000 years earlier.²⁰ Beyond the instability of the notion of wilderness so many other questions arise from the seemingly innocent suggestion that William Charles Piguénit was a conservationist and that he appreciated wilderness values and, finally, that these characteristics of the man can be detected simply by looking at his paintings. But does such treatment do justice to Piguénit and his art? Is the artist and his work little more than an historical, and perhaps unreliable, litmus test of colonial attitudes to and perceptions of the Australian environment? Does his being Tasmanian-born matter? Piguénit’s place of birth had more to do with misfortune than design, his origins were humble, his decision to become a professional artist a latent one. These are hardly the credentials of a committed conservationist one might think. Piguénit’s environmental credentials appear to rest heavily on a highly subjective view of the past having more to do with historical presentism and creative interpretation than veracity. This view of Piguénit needs to be re-considered and the outcome ought to be reviewed. This thesis considers the

¹⁹ It can be argued that, allowing for the passage of a considerable length of time although commensurate with a length of occupation extending to 60,000 years, that a hiatus of 10,000 years or so is consistent with pre-existing migration patterns and therefore that Palawa still “occupy” the country and that European colonisation has had no effect on that migrational tenure.

²⁰ Helen Gee, ‘Introduction’, in Helen Gee (ed.), *For the Forests: a History of Tasmanian Forest Campaigns* (Tasmanian Wilderness Society, Hobart 2001), p. xii.

circumstances of Piguénit's life as important influences upon his artistic production that have not previously been considered, or at least given equal weight whilst historical assessments were being made about Piguénit's art. This thesis steps back, metaphorically speaking, from the all-embracing notion that this man, Piguénit, was a conservationist and that his paintings ought to serve as a stern warning to those who prioritise progress and development over aesthetics and beauty. Whilst there is inherent merit in that idea, there is more to Piguénit than just that sought of appraisal. The outcome of this research is expected to produce a deeper and broader understanding of Piguénit and his art in the expectation that much of the literature that has been produced and which seems to be mostly conjectural in its disposition and perhaps biased in its objective can be reviewed, and so endorsed or contradicted by the conclusion of this thesis.

IV Clubs and Convicts: Growing Up in Van Diemen's Land and Tasmania

W. C. Piguenit, like Andrew Inglis Clark, grew up in society dependent on the method of exploiting convict labour yet repulsed by its means.¹ As Henry Reynolds pointed out in an essay in honour of Clark, the Hobart Town that both men grew up in was a society where 'everyone knew the other's social origins'.² Hobart was also a town where those known to have a convict ancestor were knowingly, deliberately and sometimes querulously identified as belonging to, by birth, the humiliated and hated 'criminal class'.³ Stefan Petrow calls convictism the island's 'dark secret'⁴ and Reynolds, famously coined the phrase 'that hated stain'.⁵ Because of this, Piguenit was an outsider in Hobart Town. Rich and powerful men remained happy to own Piguenit's art yet actively excluded him from any opportunity to rise above his humble, almost shameful, origins. Were it not for the charity of these men, it might be argued, Piguenit would have foundered in his early career as an artist.

Piguenit was descended from convicts. His father, Frederick Le Geyt Piguenit was a descendant of an old French Huguenot family ousted from France following the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. Frederick arrived in Van Diemen's Land from England in 1830, a common felonious criminal having been sentenced to fourteen years transportation for receiving His Majesty's stores.⁶ Frederick's exemplary conduct in the colony would help him gain a free pardon in 1841 or 1842⁷

¹ Michael Roe, 'The Federation Divide Among Australia's Liberal Idealists' in Marcus Haward and James Warden (eds.), *An Australian Democrat: the Life and Legacy of Andrew Inglis Clark* (Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, Hobart 1995), pp. 88-97, esp. p. 90.

² Henry Reynolds, 'Inglis Clark: Some Afterthoughts', in Richard Ely, Marcus Haward and James Warden (eds.), *A Living Force: Andrew Inglis Clark and the Ideal of the Commonwealth* (Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, Sandy Bay 2001), p. 396-402.

³ David Young, *Making Crime Pay: the Evolution of Convict Tourism in Tasmania* (Tasmanian Historical Research Association, Hobart 1996), p. 12.

⁴ Stefan Petrow, 'Saving Tasmania? The Anti-Transportation and Franklin River Campaigns', *Tasmanian Historical Studies*, Vol. 14 (2009), pp. 107-136, esp. p. 133.

⁵ Reynolds, 'Inglis Clark', op cit, p. 401.

⁶ Muster Roll, Item CON 31/35, TAHO.

⁷ The latter according to the press; *Launceston Examiner* (Tasmania) 26 November 1842, p. 8.

whereupon he would work as a clerk in the Hobart Town Muster Master's Office of the Police Department. In February 1833 Frederick married Mary Ann Igglesden who had followed her fiancée from England. The couple would have seven children of whom William Charles was the second eldest child and the second eldest of four boys. Frederick Le Geyt Piguenit had arrived in the colony an unwilling immigrant. He had arrived in Van Diemen's Land at a time of great social flux and upheaval, much of which came as a direct result of the form of colonialism being exacted in Van Diemen's Land around 1830.

Two years before Fredrick arrived in Van Diemen's Land, Lieutenant-Governor Arthur had, in 1828, declared war on the island's Aboriginal Nations. Years of escalating violence between Aborigines and settlers during the 1820s had, by the time Arthur's so called Black War began, reached disastrous levels.^{8,9} Arthur would later reveal that his personal failure to initiate treaty negotiations with the island's Aboriginal Nations was, by his own admission an unmitigated disaster.¹⁰ For Arthur failure followed failure as the Black Line operation of 1830 proved a dismal and expensive farce.¹¹ After the exertion of much force resulting in great bloodshed and the waste of an enormous amount of money the pendulum of British imperial policy swung toward conciliation of the natives of its colonial possessions. What had become a key characteristic of British humanitarianism abroad and would similarly

⁸ Plomley shows that as the number of settlers increased so too did the number of incidents of violence between settlers and Aborigines. His argument then suggests that the fate of the Aborigines was a Malthusian reality and thus outside the control of the colonial administrations. See N. J. B. Plomley, 'Aborigines and Governors', *Bulletin of the Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies*, Vol. 3, Iss. 1 (1990/1991), pp. 1-18.

⁹ Reynolds suggests less than 200 Europeans were killed in the conflict whilst Aboriginal casualties remain impossible to estimate but were undoubtedly high. See Henry Reynolds, *Fate of a Free People* (Penguin books, Camberwell 2004).

¹⁰ Arthur to Hay, 24 September 1832, cited in Sue Stanton, 'The Challenge for Australia: Reconciling the Treaty', in Peter Read, Gary Meyers and Bob Reece (eds.), *What Good Condition?: Reflections on an Australian Aboriginal Treaty 1986 to 2006* (Australian National University Press, Canberra 2006), pp. 89-98, esp. p. 94; also Henry Reynolds, *Aboriginal Sovereignty: Three Nations, One Australia?* (Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest 1996), p. 114.

¹¹ For a detailed exposition see J.F. McMahon, *The British Army and the Counter-Insurgency Campaign in Van Diemen's Land with particular reference to the Black Line*, Master of Arts Thesis, University of Tasmania (Hobart, 1995).

affect Arthur's own determinations in Van Diemen's Land.¹² Those remaining Aborigines who had not been murdered, killed as casualties of war or had died as victims of disease would be brought within the orbit of the colonial administration by a man seemingly gripped by the missionary impulse, George Augustus Robinson. Governor Arthur chose fellow evangelical Anglican Robinson to conduct a mission to conciliate the Aboriginal Tasmanians, to rescue them it seemed from the worst depredations of colonialism. Robinson diarised the entire event producing the *Friendly Mission* journals.¹³ The events recorded by Robinson are well known.

Robinson set out on 27 January 1830 with a retinue of European and Aboriginal men. He was completely out of sorts in the bush suggests Henry Reynolds and so entirely dependent on the bush craft, food gathering and survival skills of his companions both black and white.¹⁴ Setting out from Hobart Town Robinson's expedition headed straight for the rugged South-West. Neither Surveyor Thomas Scott's terrestrial map of 1824¹⁵ nor that of Surveyor Evans¹⁶ a copy of which Robinson took with him would have been of much help as the only charted route to Robinson's destination, Port Davey was by sea.¹⁷ Beyond the southern town of Victoria¹⁸ little was known, except for the millennia of knowledge and law possessed by the region's Aboriginal peoples. Yet the South-West was also a natural barrier to

¹² A very simplified reading of events is provided here. For more preliminary detail see Anna Johnston and Mitchell Rolls (eds.), *Reading Robinson: Companion Essays to "Friendly Mission"* (Quintus, Hobart 2008), pp. 27-44.

¹³ N. J. B. Plomley (ed.), *Friendly Mission: the Tasmanian Journals and Papers of George Augustus Robinson, 1829-1834* (Quintus, Hobart 2008).

¹⁴ Reynolds, *Fate*, p. 136.

¹⁵ Thomas Scott, *Chart of Van Diemen's Land from the best authorities and from actual surveys and measurements* / by Thomas Scott Assistant Surveyor General; engraved by Charles Thompson (Cross) Edinburgh, Scale [ca. 1: 545,000], (London 1824), 83.5 x 59 cm, available online at <<http://nla.gov.au/nla.map-nk612>>, last accessed 28 March 2012.

¹⁶ George William Evans, *Map of the settlements at Port Dalrymple, Van Diemens Land* / by G.W. Evans, Deputy Surveyor General, Scale [ca. 1:126,720] (London 1819), 61.6 x 81.1 cm., available online from the National Library of Australia at <<http://nla.gov.au/nla.map-rm733>>, last accessed 28 March 2012.

¹⁷ Indeed Scott's map was informed largely by the maritime survey of Captain Dixon of the *Skelton*. See footnote 45.

¹⁸ Now Huonville 30 kilometres south of Hobart.

the inland Aboriginal Nations.¹⁹ The Big River peoples would have been restricted to the area bounded by the western reaches of the River Derwent that closely followed the pattern of European settlement. Inasmuch as Robinson recorded that their sojourns into the South-West were at best sporadic, the belonging the Big River peoples have to their country also limited their opportunity to evade him. Although lacking skill and knowledge as a bushman, Robinson was a superb ethnographer. Archaeologist Rhys Jones would draw heavily on Robinson's ethnographic record of the South-West peoples. Robinson expedition to the South-West was in fact a preliminary visit from which he felt he had gleaned an understanding with the several Aboriginal sub-nations occupying the South-West particularly with the Port Davey peoples. Robinson's Port Davey Mission was the first recorded efforts of Europeans to venture by land into the area.²⁰ So little was known of what lay to the west of the settled south-eastern quadrant of the colony that Robinson calculated merely three days to traverse the sixty miles by longitude between Hobart and Port Davey.²¹ Having set out on 2 February Robinson had cautiously allowed seven days rations per man for the journey in the expectation of being re-victualled by sea at Port Davey. Robinson's party made the south-east coast of Port Davey ten days later having exhausted all their rations and having survived on a diet of fish, mussels and berries as could be procured by their Aboriginal guides.²² The journals kept by Robinson contain several sketches made by the author. Despite the hardships presented by the terrain encountered on the Port Davey mission on the fourth day of the expedition

¹⁹ This map provides a regional location for the different Aboriginal Nations. What it does not show is that the South-West Nation consists of many sub-nations distinguished by locality within the South-West Nation which were identified by Plomley based on Robinson's observations.

²⁰ For a good introduction to European activities in the region prior to 1830 see Ralph Gowlland and Kathleen Gowlland, *Trampled Wilderness: the History of South-West Tasmania* (C. L. Richmond & Sons, Devonport 1975).

²¹ George Augustus Robinson, N. J. B. Plomley (ed.), *Friendly Mission: the Tasmanian Journals and Papers of George Augustus Robinson, 1829-1834*, 2nd Edition (Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery/Quintus Publishing, Hobart 2008), p. 144.

²² Robinson, *Friendly Mission*, p. 150.

Robinson paused to reflect on the natural scenery and the industry of the men in his company:

Looking back I beheld the party descending the opposite mountain and I could not help regretting my want of ability to sketch their appearance winding around the mountain, cautiously proceeding: the appearance was very romantic.²³

Then on 15 March, the party made Hell's Gates, below where the Crossing River meets the Davey. Robinson describes the scene he observed from a boat:

Here the river narrows and runs between two perpendicular cliffs. The fall is rather significant, it being covered at high water...the river has a very romantic appearance, beautiful shrubs growing along its banks and numerous pine trees.²⁴

On his return as the Friendly Mission drew to a close late in 1834 Robinson returned to the South-West to remove the Aboriginal peoples from the band of coast between Port Macquarie and Port Davey. Significantly in the Port Davey region the removal of the Aborigines did not precede destruction of the base of their economies in the area. In Port Davey widespread settlement did not follow, land was not alienated wholesale, nor did pastoralism continue its inexorable sprawl into the South-West. Although the South-West Aborigines' last migration was a forced exodus under Robinson's hand, the 'tides of history' have not washed away their native title over much of the South-West it would seem, their rights were not extinguished by wholesale granting of pastoral leases as was the case throughout much of the hinterland.²⁵ Plomley's map²⁶ of the South-West suggests that no Aboriginal Nation is or was attached to the interior of this land. His assessment follows in that Robinson

²³ Robinson, *Friendly Mission*, p. 146.

²⁴ Robinson, *Friendly Mission*, p. 160.

²⁵ Reynolds argues that Robinson, albeit in a thinly veiled expression of Christian macro-empathy and enlightened self-interest, was one of the chief advocates for Aborigines to retain a proprietary interest under some form of native title preceding the arrival of the colonists. See Henry Reynolds, 'George Augustus Robinson in Van Diemen's Land: Race, Status and Religion', in Johnston and Rolls (eds.), *Reading Robinson*, op cit, pp. 161-170.

²⁶ Plomley's 'Distribution of Tasmanian Tribes' map provides a considerably more comprehensive survey and nomenclature, see Plomley (ed.), *Friendly Mission*, p. 1006-1007. But for the purposes herein see a simplified version in Helen Gee and Janet Fenton, *The South-West Book* (Australian Conservation Foundation, Melbourne 1978), p. 12.

provided next to no ethnographic information on those Aborigines further inland from the coastal peoples of the South-West. Although they would spend three weeks in the Port Davey region Robinson's attention was drawn to the well-being of him and his party given the wreck of their re-supply vessel.²⁷ This lack of detail probably has a connection to the fact that Governor Arthur's declaration of martial law over the Aborigines in 1828 only extended to the settled districts and by definition, and by Thomas Scott's map, the South-West did not meet this criteria. Central to Rhys Jones' thesis based on Robinson's ethnography was that the Aborigines of Tasmania were already in steady decline and that Robinson at worst merely hastened that natural process. Jones' archaeological account of cultural degeneration was not a denial of genocide but more a prehistory to the history of attempted colonial extermination of the Aborigines.²⁸ It is now known that contrary to the received wisdom espoused by Jones and widely accepted even amongst Aborigines until as late as the 1970s the Aboriginal Tasmanians did not as an Indigenous people succumb.²⁹ Yet in the years immediately following Robinson's mission the colonial artists of Van Diemen's Land were hastily setting about capturing for posterity the passage of the Aborigines to obscurity of history.

English-born John Glover arrived in the Van Diemen's Land colony from England in 1831. By the time of Robinson's travails in the South-West, Glover had

²⁷ Robinson, *Friendly Mission*, pp. 150-151.

²⁸ An excellent account of this assessment is given by Rebe Taylor, 'Reliable Mr Robinson and the Controversial Dr Jones', in *Reading Robinson: Companion Essays to "Friendly Mission"* (Quintus, Hobart 2008), pp. 111-126.

²⁹ The commonly held belief that the last member of the race, Truganini (there are various other spellings), daughter of a Bruny Island chieftain, died at the age of seventy three, in 1876 was still maintained at least one hundred years on. Plomley and Jones' shared theory of extinction became the received wisdom with the release of the feature film, *The Last Tasmanian* in 1978. Plomley could have derived a great deal of confidence in the extinction theory both from Robinson's account which suggests that no Aboriginal peoples occupied the interior between the lower western reaches of the Derwent Valley and Port Davey itself. Plomley was the first to admit that 'the records of explorers like Robinson were often 'prejudiced by a wish to support or demolish some theory'. Robinson's desire may indeed have been to protect the South-West Aboriginal Nations from Arthur's declaration of martial law which up to that point had only covered the settled districts, a band of European occupation extending through the midlands. Plomley was also the first to admit that archaeological investigations suffer from severe limitations both in the number of sites investigated and the handling of the findings of those investigations. See N. J. B. Plomley, 'The Tasmanian Aborigines: a Research Report', *Bulletin of the Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies*, Vol. 1, Iss. 3 (1987), pp. 4-16.

already built a reputation through his idealisations of colonial and Aboriginal ways of life on the island.³⁰ In summary assessments of Glover range between notions of Glover the ethnographer or Glover the prelapsarian idealist. What is clear is that Glover's landscapes smoothed over the irruptions of colonialism. Geoffrey Dutton in an unsophisticated if not belligerent way points out the irony of Glover's typically Arcadian vision of Aborigines 'dancing, swimming or just lying around enjoying themselves'³¹ as in *The Last Muster of the Tasmanian Aborigines at Risdon*, 1836. Dutton reminds us that contrary to Glover's impression it seems quite unlikely that this cohort would have been in a celebratory mood given the undoubted knowledge passed by oral tradition of the merciless massacre which occurred in 1804. Dutton describes that 'a trigger-happy Lieutenant Moore had opened fire on a peaceful crowd of men, women and children hunting kangaroos'.³² In a similar vein to Robinson and in further maintaining the belief in the moral uplift of the Aborigines and in keeping with the moral sentiments of the era artist Benjamin Duterrau memorialised the Aborigines and sanctified Robinson in his famous history painting *The Conciliation*, 1840.³³ By the time Duterrau had completed his epic painting nearly half a million hectares of land had been granted to new settlers most of it turned over to pasture to support the estimated one million sheep on the island.³⁴ Throughout what became known amongst the settlers as the "settled districts", the North, North Midlands, Ben Lomond, Oyster Bay and Big River Aboriginal nations felt the impact of pastoralism's sprawl most immediately. The island's Aboriginal Nations had been decimated according to Lyndall Ryan not by Jones' cultural decline but by the

³⁰ One of the finest volumes on Glover containing the most thorough catalogue of his artistic output as well as a very useful biography is Peter Timms and David Hansen (eds.), *John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque* (Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart 2003).

³¹ Geoffrey Dutton, *White on Black: the Australian Aborigine Portrayed in Art* (Macmillan, South Melbourne 1974), p. 38.

³² Dutton, *White on Black*, p. 33. The Risdon Massacre is the event Reynolds suggests was the first atrocity against Aborigines and which fuelled subsequent revenge attacks upon Europeans. See Reynolds, *Fate*, p. 76.

³³ Currently on display in the Colonial Gallery, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

³⁴ Lyndall Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*, 2nd Edition (Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest 1996), p. 83.

consequence of Robinson's conciliations. The removal of mainland Aborigines to the Bass Strait islands saw an immediate decline in birth rate brought about by the "gifting" of Aboriginal women to male sealers.³⁵ From 1840 much of the work required to extend pastoralism across the now settled districts was performed by convict assignees under the probation system.³⁶ As the settlers began to consolidate their efforts at establishing a viable colony built on the removal of Aboriginal peoples from their lands one clear statement of the success of the colonial venture would be the allotment of acquired lands into both productive and pleasurable spheres. If Glover successfully captured the Arcadian paradise that was his mythic portrayals of removed Aborigines it would become his and other artist's purpose to improve the land holdings of the settlers as much with the paintbrush as with the plough of the convict assignee. Yet the tension between a desire for the picturesque "settled" landscape and the ongoing taste for a sublime representation of nature made Van Diemen's Land a place of stark contrasts in this regard as Michael Rosenthal asks;

If what was meant to be a dark hell of frightful retribution [could] actually be a sun-kissed paradise, then how would [the colonies] shape up against England as an exemplary place from which criminals and recidivists ought to be removed?³⁷

Here then is another twist on the notion of antipodean inversion leading to a conceptual dilemma. It can be claimed that because of his birth Piquenit looked at the landscape through Australian eyes whereas those painting around him held a European gaze that must have made interpretation of the inverted antipodean landscape that much more difficult to grasp.³⁸ In 1850, when Piquenit began his

³⁵ Ryan, *Aboriginal Tasmanians*, p. 176.

³⁶ See Ian Brand, *The Convict Probation System, Van Diemen's Land, 1839-1854: a Study of the Probation System of Convict Discipline, Together with C.J. La Trobe's 1847 Report on its Operation, and the 1845 Report of James Boyd on the Probation Station At Darlington, Maria Island* (Blubber Head Press, Hobart 1990).

³⁷ Michael Rosenthal, 'The Penitentiary in Paradise', in Thomas, Nicholas and Losche, Diane (eds.), *Double Vision: Art Histories and Colonial Histories in the Pacific* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1999), pp. 103-130.

³⁸ This is the perpetuation of the notion that European artists failed to comprehend the Australian landscape with the exception of Glover.

career as a surveyor, Van Diemen's Land was at the epicentre of colonial artistry with John Glover having begun the influx. Practically every artist to have made any measure of impact on the art history of the colonies was present in Van Diemen's Land during a golden era from the mid-1840s until 1860. Yet they were all born in places other than the colonies. Among them John Skinner Prout (1805 – 1876) was in Van Diemen's Land from 1844 to 1848.³⁹ Prout's hastily executed watercolours drew criticism from his colleagues⁴⁰ his style was nonetheless popular and his landscapes were frequently copied. Prout, like Piguenit undertook sketching excursions in the South-West wilderness in the 1870s where he sketched Lake St. Clair and a waterfall on Mount Wellington along the way.⁴¹ The wonder is why Prout is not celebrated to the extent that Piguenit is.⁴² Certainly being born in Van Diemen's Land (herein VDL) and not England like Prout meant that Piguenit could be fashioned as the forefather of an indigenous landscape school of art. One of those would-be artists who followed Prout's teachings was G.T.W.B. Boyes (1787-1853) who arrived in VDL in November 1826.⁴³ Boyes is perhaps better known for his intimate diaries as for his role as colonial auditor with one of his chief tasks being the costing of Lieutenant Governor Arthur's Black Line.⁴⁴ The influence of both Prout and his mentor John Glover is highly evident in Boyes' landscapes. The lack therefore of originality in Boyes' landscapes is best considered as a stylised treatment of the landscape laden with European motifs producing a treatment that was handled more proficiently by his mentor. John Glover (1767-1849) as already described, maintained an infatuation with the Italianate landscapes of antiquity following his

³⁹ Australian Dictionary of Biography at <<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/prout-john-skinner-2565>>, last accessed 2 April 2012.

⁴⁰ Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific* (Oxford University Press, Melbourne 1989), p. 299.

⁴¹ Roslynn Haynes, 'Inscribing Culture on the Landscape', available online at <www.utas.edu.au/arts/imaging/haynes.pdf>, last accessed 2 April 2012.

⁴² Given that primary sources exist that give a far greater insight into what the artist thought and felt.

⁴³ ADB, <<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/boyes-george-thomas-1817>>, last accessed 2 April 2012.

⁴⁴ See Peter Chapman (ed.), *The Diaries of G.T.W.B. Boyes* (Oxford University Press, Melbourne 1985); also John Connor, 'British Frontier Warfare Logistics and the "Black Line", Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania), 1830', *War in History*, Vol. 9, Iss. 2 (April 2002), pp. 143-158.

arrival in Van Diemen's Land in 1829. Glover's innocent prelapsarian taste of the kind that would characterise the French Barbizon School of rural landscapes and his fanciful wish to be known as the English Claude are both suggestions which John McPhee somewhat ambivalently suggests were mocked and scoffed at by his peers.⁴⁵ Thus Glover can be understood as a naïve enthusiast, as Ian McLean writes that 'Glover's interest in the indigenous inhabitants [is] that of an Englishman nurtured by eighteenth-century Enlightenment ideals'.⁴⁶ McLean unconvincingly asserts that Glover was also a man supposedly troubled by colonial dispossession of Aboriginal land in that Glover 'by depicting the Aborigines happily at home in their land also reminds us whose land this is, [thus] countering the doctrine of terra nullius'.⁴⁷ In another direction during an interview recorded for television David Hansen curiously suggested that in Glover's landscape vision could be found a scene that is 'just pure hot, dry, midsummer Australia'.⁴⁸ We would have to be careful not to collapse Glover's entire oeuvre into one signal image that of Glover's most popular work, *My Harvest Home*, 1835.⁴⁹ This is Glover's vision of a paradise in microcosm bathed in sunlight the vitality and strength of its convict field-workers a testimony to the redemptive power of nature and Judaeo-Christian toil. Even for Glover this is a rare moment where humanity and nature combine in a mutually beneficial unison in an Edenic setting.

It would be going too far to say there exists some rivalry between Glover and Piguenit, so to speak, both competing for the title of being the first artist to accurately

⁴⁵ John McPhee, *John Glover* (Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston 1977), p. 11.

⁴⁶ Ian McLean, 'Figuring Nature: Painting the Indigenous Landscape', in Peter Timms and David Hansen (eds.), *John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque* (Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart 2003), pp. 122-133, esp. p. 122.

⁴⁷ McLean, 'Figuring Nature', p. 122.

⁴⁸ This is perhaps the case in just one Glover landscape, *My Harvest Home*, 1835, the "heat" of which has raised the amused interest of other commentators. See David Hansen, 'John Glover', transcript of an interview with George Negus, *George Negus Tonight*, television program originally broadcast 1 March 2004, available online from <<http://www.abc.net.au/gnt/history/Transcripts/s1056373.htm>>, last accessed 7 July, 2010.

⁴⁹ Currently held by the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery and on display in its Colonial Gallery, Hobart.

transcribe the Australian landscape. Roslynn Haynes and David Hansen both in various forums have conferred on Glover the title of progenitor of a particularly Australian style of landscape art naming him the “father” of Australian landscape painting. The attraction of this idea is not however universal as most commentators would argue that as an Englishman by birth Glover is excluded from consideration as an Australian artist entirely.⁵⁰ As much as the argument for environmental essentialism - a notion that only those Australian born artists can truly understand and represent the landscape of the nation of their birth – is given credence when discussing Piquenit it is dispensed with when it comes to Glover. Whereas Glover consciously set out to make VDL home for he and his family Piquenit might not have been born in Australia at all; his father’s exile and protracted stay in Hobart Town being more a matter of historical happenstance and personal vendetta than design.⁵¹ Piquenit’s father was a transported convict who might otherwise have served his seven year sentence and returned to England to start a family. Still the claim on Piquenit is maintained in absence of any other rival measured against the same criterion; that is that origins are a more important determinant of skill than formal training in measuring ability to artistically capture the particularities of the Australian environment. We shall return to the veracity of the environmental essentialism argument a little later. But while Glover distilled and indeed narrowed his interpretation of the Australian landscape to fit within the colonial picturesque, Augustus Earle (1793-1838) turned his back on the pastoral picturesque as his search for the ultimate in natural sublimity led him, if only briefly, to VDL in 1825. Earle,

⁵⁰ See for example Martin Mulligan and Stuart Hill, *Ecological Pioneers: a Social History of Australian Ecological Thought and Action* (Cambridge University Press, Oakleigh 2001), p. 43.

⁵¹ Piquenit biographer Tony Brown claims with some justification that Frederick’s many applications for a pardon made to Governor Franklin were dismissed because his original crime was the theft of ship-building material destined for the Royal Navy and that as a Royal Navy man himself, Franklin took deep offence at the theft. Tony Brown, personal communication, 29 March 2012.

the “accidental tourist”⁵² depicted a kind of native heroism in his paintings being amongst the first artists in Australia to graphically depict Aborigines as “noble savages”. His stay in Hobart Town was as mentioned brief⁵³ during which he most notably executed a multi-panel panorama of Hobart Town held by the State Library of New South Wales. There were of course many other artists present in the VDL in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Mary Morton Allport (1806-1895) ranged competently across a wide spectrum of media and themes between portraiture, natural history, ethnography and landscape. Allport may very well have been the first woman to have embarked on a career as a professional artist in the Australian colonies.⁵⁴ That she and her husband and business partners⁵⁵ chose Hobart Town as a place to launch her career as a professional painter extending into the realms of printmaking and lithography might give some indication as to the vitality of the town’s image-making industry. Indeed the remarkable vitality of Hobart Town’s creative culture and its place on the leading-edge of technical advances in mechanical means of reproduction was in large part a creation of the Allport dynasty.⁵⁶ Having completed his history painting of Aboriginal conciliator Robinson in the monumental *The Conciliation*, 1840 now hanging in the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Benjamin Duterrau

⁵² The vessel on which Earle left England, the Duke of Gloucester was wrecked enroute to Cape Town in March 1824. Earle’s first opportunity to leave the tiny isle of Tristan Da Cunha came on the Admiral Cockburn en route to Hobart Town in January 1825.

⁵³ Four months to April 1825 subsequently returning on a brief sketching tour in 1828.

⁵⁴ Joan Kerr, ‘Mary Morton Allport and the Status of the Colonial Lady Painters’, *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings*, Vol. 32. No. 2 (1984), pp. 3-17.

⁵⁵ Mary’s husband, Morton Allport held an intention to become a successful farmer, or rather landholder. When this enterprise failed he returned to his profession as a barrister and solicitor.

⁵⁶ Morton Allport (b. December, 1830 – d. Hobart Town, September, 1878) had been one of the chief organisers of the Hobart Art-Treasures Exhibition in 1858. Allport, who arrived in Van Diemen’s Land from England around December, 1831 ensured his own works were exhibited there. One of those, *Hall’s Road to the Huon*, 1858 an oil completed earlier that year looks to be a somewhat dilettantish appropriation of Eugen von Guerard’s fascinated studies of the fern. Von Guerard, who visited Van Diemen’s Land in 1855 may well have brought his sketchbook from his trip to the Dandenong Ranges he made in January 1857 along with him. If the two met, which seems likely given the timing, then *Dandenong Ranges, Ferntree Gullet (sic) 20 Feb., 1855* was probably the image von Guerard showed Allport and which Allport carefully replicated and presented at the exhibition as his own work. As enamoured with photography as Allport would later become, the art of copying the work of other artists was both simple and seemingly without moral or legal consequence for some. This practice reached its height when photographic studios began advertising that large scale prints were available with which aspiring artists could literally paint-by-numbers and pass the end product off as their own. Alternatively, as Gael Newton has pointed out, Richard Daintree and Antoine Fauchery’s *Sun Pictures of Victoria*, published in 1858 which featured a Ferntree Gully landscape and which ‘proved’ von Guerard’s own painting may have fallen into Allport’s hands. Other than that, amateur photographer-lawyer Allport single-handedly carried on the growing landscape photography trend in Tasmania from 1858 until the arrival of the man most well-known for taking Tasmanian landscapes from a somewhat schizophrenic stage, waxing between a desire for the romantic sublime and a demand for naturalistic fidelity.

(1767-1851) remained occupied with his thematic portrait-style depictions of Aborigines employing sculpture and paint in this exercise.⁵⁷ Ludwig Becker, like Earle, stayed in VDL only briefly. However, like a true Renaissance Man, Becker was an explorer and an autodidact which allowed him to indulge his enthusiasm for learning geology and the natural sciences.⁵⁸ Becker's landscapes are dilettantish remaining competent without being superlative, being suggestive of genre rather than exemplary of style seeming more attuned to topographic accuracy than to aesthetics. Becker's formalism in his landscapes is indicative of a man who learned painting like most things by rote. There were others painting in VDL including English-born Robert Dowling (1827-1886) who it is claimed is Australia's first locally-trained professional artist.⁵⁹ Dowling was a fortunate product of Hobart Town's vibrant artistic milieu in which the likes of other immigrants Glover and Duterrau, photographers Thomas and Alfred Bock, the Allport's and portraitists such as Henry Mundy, Frederick Strange, Thomas Wainwright, Frederick Frith and the copyists Henry Gritten and Haughton Forrest all circulated. Some were simply enthusiasts of independent means whilst others were professionals out of necessity undertaking whatever work they could as photographic copyists to earn a living. *The Photographic News*, in what reads as almost a job description for the convict forger, suggested of photography that:

This process, which requires neither talent nor tools, will be found extremely useful by those poor devils who, having no profession of their own or sinecure under government, are reduced to the hard necessity of fraudulently imitating bank-notes.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ See Stephen Scheduling, *The National Picture* (Vintage, London 2002).

⁵⁸ See Marjorie Tipping, *Ludwig Becker: Artist and Naturalist with the Burke and Wills Expedition* (Melbourne University Press, Carlton 1979) and, *The Life and Work of Ludwig Becker (1808-1861): with a Critical Analysis of his Australian Oeuvre and an Appreciation of his Contribution to Artistic and Scientific Developments in Victoria*, M.A. Thesis, Department of Fine Arts, University of Melbourne, 1978.

⁵⁹ Dowling indeed is said to 'hold a special place in the history of Australian art as its first home-grown artist'. See John Jones, *Robert Dowling: Tasmanian Son of Empire* (Thames and Hudson, Port Melbourne 2010).

⁶⁰ 'Special Correspondent, Foreign Science, Correspondence', in William Crooks (ed.), *The Photographic News: a Weekly Record of the Process of Photography*, Volume I (Cassell, Petter and Galpin, London 1859), p. 247.

Given Van Diemen's Land's status as a penal colony and that nearly 75,000 transportees received their punishment in the colony it is no surprise that the occasional artist should be in their midst. Convict Thomas Bock (1790-1855) became a portraitist painting convicts, Aborigines and settlers at the expense of his early proficiency with landscapes. Arriving in VDL in January 1824 Bock was among the chief instigators of photography in Hobart Town in the early 1840s. William Gould, convicted felon and transportee is better known for his fruit and flower oils and of course his paintings of fishes rather than his landscapes.⁶¹ Convicted forger Joseph Lycett (1774-1825) may have visited VDL but this cannot be confirmed. However Lycett's Van Diemonian water colours if only serving as graphic illustrations of Governor Macquarie's observations⁶² emphasise British imperialism as the artist appears to do little more than appease his masters. Norwegian-born Knut (Knud) Bull (1811-1899) following a request from the Norwegian government was tried and convicted of attempted bank note counterfeiting and sentenced to 14 years transportation to the colonies. Bull arrived in Hobart Town when outdoor photography was both new and flourishing. Van Diemonian scenes were amongst the first captured anywhere in the colonies as daguerreotypes were enthusiastically embraced as the ideal medium for capturing natural scenes. Gaining a full pardon in 1853 it would seem that having received his ticket-of-leave would have relieved the "stain" of convictism. But Bull remained caught up in a local atmosphere of fear and revulsion toward even those convicts who had served their term and met the conditions of good behaviour just as Piquenit would find. Bull was doubly-disadvantaged in that public fears of convict recidivism supported by a hysterical belief in hereditary criminality compelled the colonial authorities to retain Tasmania's

⁶¹ See Richard Flanagan's historical fiction, *Gould's Book of Fish: a novel in Twelve Fish* (Pan Macmillan, Sydney 2001).

⁶² Macquarie visited Van Diemen's Land in 1821.

high level of policing above what ought to have been expected given the high proportion of ex-convict to free settler within the population.⁶³ Emerging from this enterprising and inventive if not claustrophobic environment was Piquenit. By 1860 much of the fervour that had positioned VDL as the hub of colonial artistry had dissipated. This would eventually leave Piquenit in creative isolation, unlike Robert Dowling, without any accomplished mentor from whom to learn and receive encouragement and direction. More than that VDL was about to experience the severest of economic downturns as a consequence of a desire to free itself from its convict associations.

As Reynolds has pointed out Tasmania's economy was founded on cheap convict labour.⁶⁴ When this economic prop was suddenly withdrawn in 1853 the colony's entire economy tottered. What Reynold's evocatively terms the 'icy blast' of depression congealed Tasmanian society and ossified the fledgling state's march toward democracy. In this way social mobility was to a large degree thwarted by lost opportunities and stifled ambitions. Piquenit was right to have remained within the relative safety of this low-paid but nevertheless secure civil service job at least until he could escape the quagmire of economic recession that was suffocating Tasmania. With the cessation of transportation in 1853 the number of convicts in Van Diemen's Land would plummet to little more than 1000 in 1862.⁶⁵ Despite its drawbacks and escalating costs to the colonial treasury that many saw as a further justification for the abolition of transportation economic development in the colony had become tied to

⁶³ See Stefan Petrow, 'Claims of the Colony: Tasmania's Dispute with Britain over the Port Arthur Penal Establishment', *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (December 1997), pp. 221-240; also, Petrow, 'Policing in a Penal Colony: Governor Arthur's Police System in Van Diemen's Land, 1826-1836', *Law and History Review*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Summer 2000), pp. 351-395.

⁶⁴ Henry Reynolds, *The Island Colony: Tasmania, Society and Politics, 1880-1900*, M.A. Thesis, University of Tasmania (Hobart 1963), p. 14.

⁶⁵ 'Immigration Timeline, Tasmanian Events, Tasmania 1840-1859', available online at <<http://eplanner.education.tas.gov.au/item/edres/b7b87a46-224d-71b6-1b72-be995f251f7f/1/Timeline.zip/1840-tasmanian.html>>, last accessed 23 February, 2010.

the convict probation system. It is understandable why many individuals sought to deny, obscure or entirely obliterate any association with such a tainted past. A young boy at the time transportation to Van Diemen's Land was 'indefinitely suspended'⁶⁶ in 1846, Piguénit grew to manhood in a society that, according to James Boyce, remained riven by this caste-based system where a temporal distinction between the old Van Diemen's Land and the new Tasmania fell decisively between convict and free, emancipist and landed gentry.⁶⁷ This was not a time when Tasmanians wanted to look backwards with an enthusiasm gilded with nationalistic pride seeking humbler home-grown origins but forward toward closer and more amenable relations with Mother England. In so looking forward and perhaps in renewing ties with England the past in the now maturing Van Diemen's Land colony was necessarily occluded.

The assertion here is that despite the brighter moral outlook being talked about in the new Tasmania in political circles the way the colony actually functioned remained tightly tethered to the past. It was as if the Tasmanian colony saw itself as the distillation of all that was good about England, especially the scouring, cleansing effect a history of radicalism had on its sullied past of monarchic despotism.⁶⁸ Reynolds writing in the late 1960s might be viewed as having gone too far in his denouncement of Van Diemen's Land/Tasmania as the most un-Australian of the colonies/states.⁶⁹ Inasmuch as Tasmanians looked toward England, men of the period like Andrew Inglis Clark typically held a vaguely republican outlook whilst looking back to England's hard-won gains of the Glorious Revolution thus remaining both

⁶⁶ Petrow, 'Saving Tasmania', p. 109.

⁶⁷ James Boyce, *Van Diemen's Land* (Black Inc., Melbourne 2008), pp. 158-159

⁶⁸ Perhaps a provocative statement but intentionally pointing towards John Hirst's qually provocative essay where he challenges Russel Ward's frontier thesis, *The Australian Legend*, with Hirst arguing that, in agreeing with Reynold's, that Tasmania with its higher proportion of convicts ought to exhibit in greater degree Ward's anti-authoritarianism but which, on the contrary, is more beholden to a British past than any other colony/state. See Hirst, 'An Oddity from the Start: Convicts and National Character', *The Monthly Essays*, July 2008, available online at <<http://www.themonthly.com.au/monthly-essays-john-hirst-oddity-start-convicts-and-national-character-1074>>, last accessed 4 June 2012.

⁶⁹ Reynolds, *The Island Colony*, *passim*.

‘drawn to England’s republican heritage’ yet equally enticed by the American Revolution.⁷⁰ The England Tasmanians wanted to be part of still adored the British monarchy but shuddered at the thought of its once omnipotent power. This bipartisan view of both the past and the future would create real social effects in Hobart Town.

The foundation in Van Diemen’s Land of the Union Club in 1834 saw the best traditions of Restoration London’s gentlemen’s clubs transported to the antipodes. Among those traditions were a disgust for the excesses of the French Revolution, a warm regard for England’s failed republican experiment and a sanguine respect for America’s revolutionaries. Paradoxically such clubs also appeared to act as bulwarks against the very forces in and of revolution - harvest failures and despotism, anarchy and violence – by providing sanctuary for their members. The Van Diemen’s Land chapter of the Union Club was formed with a ‘determination to limit its members to “gentlemen”, men with aristocratic connections in England and the leisured way of life guaranteed by large landed estates’.⁷¹ In absence of a fortunate birth such an association with gentlemen could be won through obtaining a good education, by exhibiting passable manners and by achieving financial success in an occupation that at least allowed the appearance of leisure. Indeed the relaxation of the rules drafted from their English antecedents was necessary in the early days of the colony. The Club was thus beholden to a ‘policy of inclusiveness’⁷² by accepting those without the appropriate lineage. It did this perhaps not out of any sense of liberalism but rather that the exclusive recruitment of aristocrats at the exclusion of self-made men such as

⁷⁰ Clark’s interest, suggests Michael Bennett, in the English republican tradition needs to be seen as homologous with the American Revolution. See Michael Bennett, ‘Clark’s “The Commonwealth versus Cromwell”: Clark, Cromwell, and the English Republic’, in Richard Ely, Marcus Howard and James Warden (eds.), *A Living Force: Andrew Inglis Clark and the Ideal of the Commonwealth* (Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, Sandy Bay 2001), pp. 208-236. Where Clark found inspiration was in that where the English Revolution was akin to an attempt at renewal of existing political institutions the American one gave hope to the notion of a community of federations linked by a common language not beholden to heritable powers but to open democratic processes.

⁷¹ Peter Bennison, *The Tasmanian Club, 1861-2011* (The Tasmanian Club, Hobart 2011), p. 9

⁷² Bennison offers this analysis in suggesting that clubs in the antipodes would eschew the notion of gentlemen’s clubs, imported from England, as places where parliamentary factions were crystallized. Bennison, *Tasmanian Club*, p.9.

mercantilists and military men, civil servants such as surveyors, and of officers of the courts and of parliament would have left, in Van Diemen's Land, a very small pool of potential Clubmen indeed. Be that as it may, in terms strictly limited to the particular situation in Van Diemen's Land, an emerging colony with its economic prospects tied so closely to agricultural and mercantile prosperity fuelled chiefly by a constant stream of free indentured labour the "ruling" class of that colony continued to bolster the Clubs membership stocks. It was, from 1843, only once the colonial administration saw applying convict labour to the execution of public works as the chief responsibility of responsible government that the fabric of personal integrity that fused club member and landed gentry into one entity within the Club's walls suddenly strained and tore under the resultant financial pressure. A paradox existed at the heart of the Union Club which would ultimately bring about its downfall.

While many radical members of an already radicalised Club perhaps derided the British Government's "colonial solution" to its own law and order problem at home by transporting its miscreants and felons to the colonies many of the same relied for their own economic prosperity upon the free convict labour they had once enjoyed as profiteers of the very same system.⁷³ The wealthiest members of the colony were those willing or able to support the expense of convict probation instead of the free assignment system which preceded it yet their numbers were insufficient to make such a system viable'.⁷⁴ Falling member subscriptions led to the closure of the Union Club around 1847 which paved the way for the Tasmanian Club modelled in precisely the same elitist and exclusionist model. Although there is conflicting evidence as to the date when the Tasmanian Club members first occupied their rented

⁷³ Indeed, Bennison attributes, with some bitterness, the demise of the Union Club to the English governments initial suspension and ultimate abandonment of convict transportation from 1846, writing that 'ultimately, the policy of the British Government to make the colonies pay for the convict system (rather than the British taxpayer) became an unsustainable burden which led to a breakdown of the system'. Bennison, *Tasmanian Club*, p. 19.

⁷⁴ Bennison, *Tasmanian Club*, p. 20

premises at Webb's Hotel (now known as Hadley's) in Murray Street, Hobart nevertheless from sometime between mid-October and mid-November 1861 the Tasmanian Club got underway.⁷⁵ From the start the club wielded significant political and economic power. Membership of the Club was an essential prerequisite to attaining any measure of political ascent in the colony. Out of the seventy founders no less than fourteen were members of the parliament; these included the Premier of Tasmania, two ex-Premiers and several ex-ministers.⁷⁶ In these circumstances it was obvious that the Club had a strong political background largely because political affiliations, the division of politics into its familiar left and right spheres, had not yet formerly taken hold in the colony. Although there were no definite political parties until later the moves between the "Ins" and the "Outs" rather than the left and the right were usually initiated behind the Club doors in the tradition of certain London clubs of the period such as Carlton, Brooks' and White's'.⁷⁷

From clubs such as Brooks the Tasmanian Club mimicked the Whig political tradition⁷⁸ and thus became a breeding ground for aspiring politicians. So by proxy rather than design the Tasmanian Club remained from its inception until around 1944 the ex-officio headquarters of Liberal/Conservative leaning politicians in the state.

⁷⁵ Bennison, *Tasmanian Club*, p. 31.

⁷⁶ Frank C. Green, *The Tasmanian Club, 1861-1961* (The Tasmanian Club, Hobart 1961). This was the case at the time of writing of Greens history in 1961. Green's chronology is confusing in that whilst foundation member T. D. Chapman was indeed Premier at the time of the Club's foundation in 1861, other foundation members and future Premiers J. Whyte and J. Wilson could only be considered ex-Premiers if viewed from Green's perspective in 1961. In 1961, W. A. Bethune would be Premier, however the then Labor Premier Eric Reece was not admitted to the Club.

⁷⁷ Green, *Tasmanian Club*, p. 6.

⁷⁸ Whilst neither being subversive of the monarchy nor particularly republican in its agenda, the Club nevertheless exhibits the hallmarks of a coterie connected by lineal descent from the English model of aristocracy, enjoying the benefits of Old World institutions whilst indulging few of them. Importantly though the Club exhibits perhaps not an entirely secular approach to its formulation, but rather presents the countenance of a body more concerned with rigorous theological debate as part of its broader embrace of civic affairs. Nevertheless, the Club's membership over the years has consisted of no fewer than 30 reverends and higher orders of the Anglican church but not a single cardinal in the Club's 148 year history. It is perhaps going too far to say that the Tasmanian Club in maintaining this particular sacred bias is deliberately anti-Catholic but rather seeks to ignore religious ordination, particularly as the authority and predominance of the Anglican church faces no particular threat within or without the Club. For the Tasmanian Club its Protestantism is more a matter of the associational form it takes within the Club rather than any statutory or congregational recognition. Perhaps if voluntary religious association based on familial links as much as anything were not a reality in the state then the particular religious bias evident in the Club's membership might be considered less benign. It is that the reunification of the church and state that arbitrarily and unofficially occurs within the Club's walls poses no threat to the status quo that means its occurrence goes unchallenged.

For the period from 1861 until 1885 no less than 16 consecutive Premiers⁷⁹ had been or would be Club members suggesting that political success was not just linked to the Club but that political power in the state remained controlled by a tightly-knit and somewhat secretive oligarchy. Today this is no longer the case as since 1923 the democratic socialist Labor Party has dominated state elections.⁸⁰ So although there existed no distinct political parties⁸¹ until after World War II, political debate was encouraged within the Club. So exactly how was political dominance maintained within the purportedly democratic Tasmanian Club? The method of “black balling” prospective members was a highly useful strategy to balance the numbers toward one political faction rather than another.⁸² In accordance with the time-honoured formula the casting of a ball either in the “for” or “against” compartment, the latter being known as “the black ball”, admittance to the Club remained jealously guarded as more than one black ball in ten would exclude a candidate.⁸³ Much like the clubs that emerged in Restoration England from which the Tasmanian Club obtains its lineal descent the method of restricting membership in order to ‘lend the club an air of prestigious attraction to blue-blooded applicants’⁸⁴ via “black-balling” remained a weapon that not only maintained a restrictive policy on its membership but could also be used capriciously. Not only could “blackballing” be used to maintain the political status quo within the Club it could also be used to wound the ego of a prospective member and therefore stifle his ambitions and keep him in his place. Being “blackballed” could also seriously damage that individual’s reputation and prospects

⁷⁹ Until Conservative J. Evans in 1904. See Appendix A.

⁸⁰ W. A. Bethune was the last ex, current or future Tasmanian Premier to be admitted, in 1944, to the Club.

⁸¹ See P. M. Weller, ‘The Organisation of Early Non-Labor Parties in Tasmanian’, *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings*, Vol. 18, No. 4, October 1971, pp. 137-155.

⁸² In 1876 C. H. Bromby, a ‘colourful local politician’ of the time became a victim of black-balling prospective members. Apparently he had made unsavoury remarks about Colonial Secretary and Attorney General F. M. Innes at the previous elections. Innes had been accepted into the Tasmanian Club just 12 months prior to Bromby’s attempt. Bromby was never admitted to the Club. See Bennison, p. 70.

⁸³ Bennison, *Tasmanian Club*, p. 36. This method changed in 1873 as members from then either voted “for” or “against” by placing a piece of paper with either word on it in the same box.

⁸⁴ Bennison, *Tasmanian Club*, p. 6.

regardless of their political aspirations. The sense is that “blackballing” affected only those nominees whose membership might unsettle the establish political pact or alternatively bring disrepute upon the Club such as a man carrying a convict ancestry. As Henry Reynolds has pointed out the two most distinctive features of the Van Diemonian society that Andrew Inglis Clark and William Charles Piguenit⁸⁵ knew as children and young men were the convict system and the pervasive power and influence of the gentry.⁸⁶ In the Tasmanian Club these two features of Van Diemonian society came together in the form of a landed gentry whose success was established by the assignment of convict labour. It was a society, suggests Reynolds, that had more than anywhere else in Australia begun showing the ‘signs of developing caste-like characteristics with the emancipist working class forever branded with the hated stain, where [in Hobart] everyone knew the other’s social origins, even the children of the convicts carrying the stigma of their parent’s criminal history’.⁸⁷ Evidence not surprisingly is scant regarding the exclusion of men with convict ancestry from the Club. As with most things there are exceptions which when displayed so proudly seem to suggest something like the offering of an alibi in the absence of an accuser. Club President in 1961 Dr. Thomas Giblin in his foreword to Green’s centennial history pressed the point about the presence of an ex-convict within the Club yet remained at pains it seems to illustrate the Club’s munificence. To quote Giblin;

One, however, manifests the fact that men were not as ruthless or as bigoted in the mid-Victorian days as we would be led to believe. He [child convict Henry Smith] was a Gentleman who had received his education at Point Puer; and from that school to the Tasmanian Club was a very long way at the time of our foundation. To have

⁸⁵ Clark and Piguenit knew each other well and were friends, the latter addressing the former ‘my dear Clark’ in the opening to a letter he wrote in April 1888. See University of Tasmania Library ePrints available online at <<http://eprints.utas.edu.au/10353/>>, last accessed 6 March 2012. The same letter also mentions Clark’s fellow Tasmanian Club member Edward Braddon who would become Premier in April 1894.

⁸⁶ Henry Reynolds, ‘Inglis Clark: Some Afterthoughts’, in Richard Ely, Marcus Haward and James Warden (eds.), *A Living Force: Andrew Inglis Clark and the Ideal of the Commonwealth* (Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, Sandy Bay 2001), pp. 396-402.

⁸⁷ Reynolds, ‘Inglis Clark’, p. 397.

overcome his past and on a personal basis, to have been accepted into our Club at its inception, was indeed a great personal tribute. My father, who knew various Foundation members, when he joined the Club sixty years ago, never failed to draw my attention to this act of tolerance and to say that this gentleman was held in high esteem by the community when he was elected to join us.⁸⁸

Yet Giblin never actually named the particular member as Henry Smith. Rather the conclusion must have been made from the fact that prior to the above recollection Giblin had been discussing in his foreword to Green's book, the club's Portrait Gallery of Foundation Members of which Henry Smith was one. The matter could have been laid to rest were it not for Bennison's desire, Bennison also being a current Tasmanian Club member, to recount this story in 2011 when he stated that Giblin was aware that an original Club member and Imperial Ordnance Department clerk, Henry Smith was a "Point Puer boy" or child convict. Little is known of Smith's early life. However, Dr. Giblin annotated the comment in his copy of Green next to Henry Smith's name. Remaining convict records of Port Arthur are silent on the matter, says Bennison, which is to say that the Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office lists over 100 convict transportees with the name Henry Smith within the pages of its collection of convict indents. Bennison's unqualified addition is that Henry Smith himself "says" that he came to Van Diemen's Land in 1851 to work in the Imperial Ordnance Department and made no comment about his life prior to that date. There was indeed a Henry Smith employed as a clerk in that department from 1851 but also a Henry E. Smith employed by the Survey Department in a senior position the latter appearing as a much more likely candidate for Club membership than his namesake. Apart from Henry Smith's opaque past there is little doubt that the members of the new Tasmanian Club were leading figures in Hobart Town society. It is though exceedingly unlikely that the Club would have admitted a lowly civil servant to its

⁸⁸ Thomas Giblin 'Foreword', in Green, *Tasmanian Club*, pp. 1-2.

ranks remaining much more likely to admit a man who was both a surveyor and high ranking member of the civil service as such a man would have been amongst colleagues and men of similar station. Giblin's recollection can be considered unreliable at best and vexatious at worst in that it is probably a manifestation of personal jealousies and rivalries if not just faulty memory and that Bennison's account is the product of controlled speculation based on the recollections of one individual and nothing more. More significantly this kind of exaltation of the good and denial of the bad as Roe⁸⁹ has put it remains a fairly typically Whiggish interpretation of convictism in that personal redemption ought to be the outcome of well-functioning criminal justice system.⁹⁰ It is also evidence of the stigmatisation of convictism as not being something to necessarily deny but rather in liberal fashion, to improve upon. In 1888 among those elected to the Tasmanian Club was Andrew Inglis Clark then barrister, politician, puisne judge, and in 1916 William Bispham Propsting MLC, both of whom had a convict father and which proves that high credentials were enough to enable individuals to "jump the convict bar" and be accepted into the Club. This was liberalism in action as distinct from passive servility in its original sense; a mode of thought and praxis suitable for a free man and a gentleman. No such grace was shown to William Charles Piguénit. Like his father, Frederick Piguénit convict transportee and descendant of religious exiles we might suppose, his was the doubly essential émigré experience that of economic and religious exile. But under the same circumstance and having left the security of the civil service, Piguénit became wholly dependent on the charity of men who despised the stain of convictism and remained suspicious of those descended from them. Yet

⁸⁹ Michael Roe, 'Foreword', in Roe (ed.), *The Flow of Culture: Tasmanian Studies* (Australian Academy of Humanities, Canberra 1988).

⁹⁰ In Roe's terms 'genial, congratulatory and optimistic', see Richard Ely, 'What is the Whig View of Australian History?', *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings*, Vol. 25, No. 1, March 1978, pp. 14-17.

these men remained, perhaps forcibly, liberal in their outlook demanding reforms which were not possible save in the knowledge that the social and economic status quo that existed from the inception of the transportation system remained. These are the same men who wished for there to be no fluid transition from penal colony to democratic society but rather that political power should remain in the hands of a tightly-knit oligarchy of land owners and political aspirants where political and financial favours were doled out piecemeal.

Among the Tasmania Club's members was James Backhouse Walker (1841-1899). Walker was born in Hobart the son of Quaker missionary and total abstinence pioneer, along with James Backhouse, George Washington Walker and his Tasmanian wife Sarah Benson.⁹¹ As a young man duly influenced by the desire of his father for the uplifting of the social and moral conditions in the colony and elsewhere James attended the Congregational Church in Collins Street, Hobart Town. There he met the Reverend George Clarke. It was Clarke perhaps rather than George Walker who encouraged in James the ability to soften the evangelical creed of Quakerism by employing affection and tolerance rather than dogmatism to win the confidence of those he sought to uplift.⁹² Among the circle of friends Walker made at the Congregational Church were William Giblin, Charles Walch, Philip Fysh and Henry Dobson.⁹³ Amongst these young men James enjoyed the company of three future premiers. All were or soon would be members of the Tasmanian Club. Walker would remain friends with these men and when Fysh became Premier in August of 1877 one of the first moves he made outside of parliament was to see his friend James Backhouse Walker admitted to the Tasmanian Club. Here Walker would meet more

⁹¹ Walker, James Backhouse, *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (ADB), available online at <<http://www.adb.anu.edu.au>>, last accessed 5 March 2012.

⁹² George Clark, 'Biographical Sketch', in James Backhouse Walker, *Early Tasmania: Papers Read before the Royal Society of Tasmania during the Years 1888-1899* (Government Printer, Hobart 1973), pp. v-viii.

⁹³ Walker, *ADB*.

like-minded men, men interested in the natural sciences.⁹⁴ Among those like-minded individuals men such as Gould, Sharland and Tully was fellow explorer James Reid Scott (1839-1877) a Scot by birth and who was elected to the Tasmanian Club in 1867.⁹⁵ It was amongst these men all Tasmanian Club members that Piguénit would spend so much time bush-walking, camping and sketching in Tasmania's remote South-West as we shall see later.⁹⁶ It was during this period from 1871 to 1887 when Piguénit would make four such visits to the South-West honing his craft as a landscape painter. Away from Hobart Town's judgemental gaze Piguénit was accepted by those men who publically shunned him.

Although following Robinson by nearly four decades, J. R. Scott along with Piguénit and others in his retinue were amongst the first Europeans to explore Tasmania's South-West. Scott's first recorded trek through the region was in February 1871. On this occasion Scott was accompanied by Frank McPartland constable of the South Port police district, two hired hands to carry provisions, and Piguénit as the expedition's artist. It was on this Piguénit's first expedition into the South-West that his sketches of Hell's Gates, the Arthur Range and Lake Pedder were taken and which would form the illustrations of a paper Piguénit would deliver entitled *Among the Western Highlands* to the Australian Association for the Advancement of Science at its Hobart meeting in 1892. In the meantime Scott's report to *The Mercury* gives a thoroughgoing account of most aspects relevant for the expansion of settlement into the area.⁹⁷ Immediately upon his return from his first

⁹⁴ Foundation members of the Tasmanian Club Charles Gould civil servant and government geologist; William Stanley Sharland government surveyor; and William Alcock Tully government surveyor were men Piguénit would have held a professional association with during his tenure at the Lands Department.

⁹⁵ See *Mercury* (Hobart), Wednesday 5 April, 1871, pp. 2-3; also Tuesday 21 September 1875, p. 2; and to read those articles with additional narrative see Garry Kerr and Harry McDermott, *The Huon Pine Story: the History of Harvest and Use of a Unique Timber* (Mainsail Books, Portland 1999), esp. Chapter 2: First of the Freelance Piners 1832-82, pp. 15-24.

⁹⁶ Piguénit's first patron was J. W. Agnew, one of the earliest members of the Club and a man who would become Premier in March 1886.

⁹⁷ James Reid Scott, 'Arthur Plains and Port Davey', *Mercury* (Hobart), 5 April 1871, pp. 2-3.

expedition into the South-West, Piguénit left his low-paid job in the Lands Department in 1872.⁹⁸ Again, in 1873 Piguénit accompanied Scott's party on another expedition only on this occasion surveying the area surrounding Lakes Pedder and St. Clair.⁹⁹ Piguénit made a third visit to the area in 1874 this time in the company of Robert Mackenzie Johnston (1843-1918) and Scott and three others. Like Scott and Walker, Johnston was also an amateur scientist and enjoyed giving lectures and presenting papers to the Royal Society on topics as wide and as varied as biology, palaeontology and botany which Piguénit occasionally illustrated. Once more in February 1887 Piguénit joined Surveyor Charles Percy Sprent's, West Coast party. What is of significance here is that Piguénit would always remain on the periphery of this group of gentlemen. Clearly he was among friends on the four expeditions, or so it seems. But it also seems Piguénit was never in possession of sufficient pedigree to attain membership to the Tasmanian Club despite the fact that he was in the company of men that were members. What Piguénit did not know was the nature of the views expressed in private by those who he not only saw as "friends" but also as much needed patrons. Edward Braddon, who would become premier only months later expressed his thoughts on the matter of convictism revealing his deep suspicion in noting that:

They were convicts once and must remain under suspicion until the end of their days. Young Tasmania cannot forgive those of the former generations who wear the convict brand; cannot believe that they have reformed; cannot believe any sort of good of them, and delights always to think and speak ill of them.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Jonathan Holmes attributes all of the sketches which were worked up in monochromatic oils for the A.A.A.S. meeting in Hobart in 1892 to the 1871 expedition to Port Davey. See Holmes, 'In Black and White: W. C. Piguénit's Monochrome Paintings and the Imaging of the Tasmanian Wilderness in the "Picturesque Atlas of Australasia"', *Kannunah*, Vol. 3 (2008), pp. 1-12.

⁹⁹ James Reid Scott, 'Port Davey in 1875', *The Mercury* (Hobart), 21 September 1875, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ Edward Braddon, 'A Home in the Colonies', *The Statesman and New Friend of India*, XXVIII, October 1878.

Piguenit called Braddon a friend and Braddon was among Piguénit's most generous patrons. As to the degree to which Braddon extended friendship in return, this remains unknown. In his associations with James Backhouse Walker and other members of the Tasmanian Club Piguénit would be burdened by tainted familial associations not all of which were so distant. In August 1857, his father Frederick Piguénit became the licensee of the Bush Inn at New Norfolk about 30 kilometres north of Hobart the advertisement in *The Courier* announced that:

F. L. Piguénit begs to inform his friends and the public in general, that he has succeeded to the management of this highly popular Establishment, where he trusts by strict attention to the comfort of his visitors to merit the support of the gentry of Tasmania and the adjoining colonies...families from the neighbouring colonies will find this a most delightful retreat, embracing all the comforts of an English home.¹⁰¹

Temperance was a key issue in the colony in 1850s and the debate over alcohol and its social effects was hotly contested.¹⁰² Of special relevance for temperance advocates were the statistics which showed amongst other things that publicans were the largest commercial retail group in the colony.¹⁰³ For temperance advocates men like Frederick Piguénit were peddling in the misery of others. The Temperance movement was introduced in Van Diemen's Land in the form of a pledge given in 1832 by English Quakers, father of James, George Walker, and, James Backhouse. Its focus was on extending sanctions on the use of alcohol from mere temperance to total abstinence. Through political lobbying and moral persuasion the prohibitionists led by Walker and Backhouse sought social licence for their ideas. The two led public meetings and approached prominent citizens to form local chapters of the temperance

¹⁰¹ *Courier* (Hobart), Wednesday 12 August 1857, p. 4

¹⁰² 'Temperance', *The Companion to Tasmanian History* available online at <http://www.utas.edu.au/library/companion_to_tasmanian_history/>, last accessed 21 February 2012.

¹⁰³ In 1854 there were 180 pubs in Hobart Town whilst the population was 23,000. See Rod Kilner, 'Temperance and the Liquor Question in Tasmania in the 1850s', *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings*, Vol. 20, No. 2, June 1973, pp. 82-97.

movement. Amongst such leaders of the community were churchmen of all Protestant denominations. Whilst some could agree with Backhouse and Walker in their temperance campaign fewer perhaps could understand Quaker opposition to the sacraments, to ritual and to a paid clergy.¹⁰⁴ Progressives within the non-Conformist Christian faiths no doubt were similarly troubled in that total abstinence should not necessarily be betokened with greater virtue than an act free will and self-control of which moderate consumption of beer, wine or spirits was but one. For them the devil was not in the drink but perhaps just a little in the deed and therefore a matter coupled to spiritual redemption rather than dogmatic exclusion. Despite the efforts of Walker and Backhouse the Temperance Movement in Van Diemen's Land did not begin operating as an organised collective until the 1880s with groups like the Woman's Christian Temperance Movement at its vanguard. Nevertheless significant pressure came to bear upon those like Frederick Piguenit who actually sold beer, wine and spirits. It appears that brewing beer, distilling spirits and even the making of wine were considered honourable professions judging by the presence of men of such vocation amongst membership lists of the Tasmanian Club. Wholesalers of beverages or "merchants" as they were more favourably called were likewise spared the vitriol of the abstainers and the tee-totallers as their vocation could be considered victualling rather than solely peddling alcohol. Indeed it was possible to mount a moral argument in support of the distillation of spirits as James Reid Scott did as such use of grain provided economic support for local agriculture. Retailers however such as Frederick Le Geyt Piguenit and other hoteliers and licencees bore the brunt of the attack on alcohol perhaps because they were the final link in the chain. It was considered somehow unconscionable to take money from men and women caught in

¹⁰⁴ William Nicolle Oats, *Backhouse and Walker: a Quaker View of the Australian Colonies, 1832-1838* (Blubber Head Press, Sandy Bay 1981), p. 58

the inescapable grip of the demon drink. Paradoxically in a further example of such enlightened self-interest Quaker missionary and temperance reformist James Backhouse was a botanist with some interest in the science of wine-making. Whilst it was one thing to grow and harvest grain to experiment with viticultural techniques and to operate a wholesale import business the actual sale of alcohol to the colony's citizenry made for an easy target for the abolitionists. Frederick relinquished his licence to operate the inn little more than twelve months later. When James Backhouse Walker discovered William Piguénit's familial connection with the "evils" of alcohol the suggestion is that this was perhaps an impossible social barrier to overcome. Piguénit's prospects for membership of the Tasmanian Club were from here on dead and buried.

Whilst it remained possible for men through their achievements to occasionally overcome the absence of the requisite familial ties this was not the case for Piguénit. Perhaps with his fortunes so closely tied to commercial matters Piguénit's art was considered more a matter of mechanical reproduction linked more closely to vocation than intellect. His paintings were indeed good enough to hang on the walls of not only future Tasmanian premiers¹⁰⁵ but within the hallowed corridors of the Tasmanian Club itself where they remain, according to Bennison, among the Club's most treasured artefacts. But for Piguénit that was of course the rub. As a professional artist Piguénit was never in the position to make comment about political

¹⁰⁵ James Agnew was Piguénit's first benefactor whilst Edward Braddon is mentioned in a letter Piguénit wrote to his cousin Fanny where he quotes correspondence from his 'great friend' in Braddon that by Braddon 'hanging [Piguénit's painting] 'in his rooms and being seen by all who call upon me here it will firstly celebrate the talent of one of Tasmania's most gifted sons and extend the knowledge of the name of Piguénit in this country'. See W. C. Piguénit, 'Letter to Fanny', 26 April 1890. A clue to at least the method of execution Piguénit used in producing the painting Braddon possessed lies in a letter to Piguénit wrote to his friend A. I. Clark. See W. C. Piguénit, 'Letter to A. I. Clark', 12 April 1888. Here Piguénit makes mention of working up 'sketches of Tasmanian scenery executed in oils but mounted in the same manner as watercolours'. Piguénit then goes on to say to Clark to 'ask Mr. Braddon if he would like [Piguénit] to get them framed here [Sydney]'. In other words Piguénit painted a landscape or landscapes for Braddon most probably in monochromatic oils on cardboard. The likely subject then seems to be the South-West wilderness and so likely to include Frenchman's Cap or perhaps Lake St Clair or possibly Mt King William as probable subjects. Braddon was a member of the Tasmanian club having been elected in 1879. Bennison notes President from 1953 to 1955 Dr. Frank W. Fay had been generous to the club by 'donating two excellent paintings: one by W. C. Piguénit of the *King William Range* 1887 and the other by John Glover entitled *Rydal, Cumberland*'. See Bennison, p. 268.

matters lest he lose favour with the leader of one faction or another and then lose that man's patronage. Amongst the Club's members but in private company Piguénit's company was welcomed or at least not overtly objected to whilst his artistic craftsmanship lauded by them, and in Legge's case his personal and professional qualities and achievements celebrated posthumously. But as Bennison found the Club's records covering the period from its inception to 1900 are scant.¹⁰⁶ On the matter of his exclusion from the Club, Piguénit remained silent. But then by remaining outside of the Club he could remain remote from the spheres of political influence that existed within the Club's walls the power of which could make or break men's careers. In 1892 honorary membership to the Club was bestowed upon Piguénit.¹⁰⁷ However, such a belated acceptance seems more like another act of charity than anything else. Piguénit required accommodation whilst in Hobart Town to deliver his *Among the Western Highlands* paper and it was a necessity of the Club's by-laws that guests including those requesting lodgings be made honorary members. This was not an acknowledgement of Piguénit's contribution to Hobart Town's culture but merely a matter of practical consideration of a friend in need. By this stage in Piguénit's life Tasmania would be but a destination for study tours to gather more material for the making of more Romantic landscapes.¹⁰⁸ New South Wales was, from 1880, Piguénit's home. To conclude, the *Illustrated Sydney News*, the editorial committee of which developed a long and significant relationship with Piguénit, made the case most concisely stating that;

¹⁰⁶ He notes 'there is virtually no primary source information on the period 1861 to 1880'. See Bennison, *Tasmanian Club*, p. xi. As we know Piguénit became a resident of New South Wales in 1880 and so would have only received honorary membership.

¹⁰⁷ Bennison notes 'a notable Hobartian admitted as an honorary member during 1892 was the artist W. C. Piguénit and that the Club later came into possession of some of his fine paintings'. It was however and remains common practice for individuals attending the club for whatever purpose to become honorary members. This would include not only guests of members but others attending the Club to perform all manner of services and activities. For instance a historian L. S. Bethell was admitted as an honorary member in order to prepare a report in time for the 1961 release of Green's centenary history. Honorary membership was also effected so that foreign diplomats may use the Club's facilities, including sleeping quarters, when in Hobart. Tariffs have been in place for those visitors wishing to use the Club's accommodation. For more detail see Bennison, *Tasmanian Club*, p. 188.

¹⁰⁸ Although in the letter to Clark Piguénit speaks of 'the light little island I am proud to call my native land'.

Piguenit hails from a land which is not supposed to specially develop the dreaming [ambitious] faculty. Tasmania, like many another mother, has proved churlish to her gifted child. From the moment the artist devoted himself exclusively to the private pursuit of art, he became not *merely* a Tasmanian, but an Australian, of whom all the colonies were alike proud.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ 'Mr. W. C. Piquenit: an Australian Artist', *Illustrated Sydney News* (Sydney), 6 February 1890, p. 5. Emphasis added.

V New South Wales and a New Beginning

For Piguénit despite the difficulties he encountered the decision to leave Tasmania was not an easy one. Piguénit found, as many islanders do, that some of the best aspects of living in a small community are also some of its worst. Meanwhile as Peter Hay has noted:

[I]slands attract affection, loyalty, identification. Islands are “places”, special places, paradigmatic places, topographies of meaning in which the qualities that construct place are dramatically distilled¹

Greg Young counters that ‘myth’s’ such as that of the island’s harmony and sanctuary ‘work to keep worthwhile psychic growth in check and are part of the cultural silence which in Tasmania can be deafening’.² Finally as Henry Reynolds once occasioned ‘Tasmania is a bloody sad place, you can still hear the Aborigines crying in the wind’.³ In 1875 Piguénit chose to leave Tasmanian temporarily. He went to the Blue Mountains in New South Wales where he sought out Frederick Eccleston Du Faur who had been influential in encouraging Piguénit to submit his Bruny Island painting for which he earned two silver medals, one in April 1874 and another in 1875.⁴ Du Faur ran an artist’s camp in the Blue Mountains to the west of Sydney. The camp was a bohemian affair where artists could by the payment of a substantial fee enjoy becoming completely emerged in the process of creating landscape art. Whether Piguénit knew so or not the Du Faur family like Piguénit were also descended from Huguenot outcasts. Du Faur along with his wife Blanche Mary Elizabeth were among

¹ Peter Hay, ‘A Phenomenology of Islands’, *Island Studies Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2006), pp. 19-42, esp. p. 31.

² Greg Young, ‘The Isle of Gothic Silence’, *Historic Environment*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (1997), pp. 4-11, esp. p. 10.

³ Henry Reynolds, *Fate of a Free People* (Penguin, Crows Nest 1995), p. 1. Reynolds relates a conversation he had with historian Malcom McRae in the late 1960s.

⁴ At the New South Wales Academy of Art and the New South Wales Agricultural Society exhibitions. See Appendix B for further details.

Piguenit's only acquaintances in New South Wales.⁵ Together, Piguenit and Du Faur made many sketching tours in the hills and valleys of the Blue Mountains district as Piguenit records in the diary. While in New South Wales at Du Faur's retreat Piguenit preferred not to work with the other artists. Piguenit's purportedly well-mannered behaviour and polite diffidence in fact probably masked a shyness that increased with age and which fuelled a sense of creative isolation. This consensus has been reached on the strength of a single piece of evidence; an obituary offered by one of the few individuals outside of his family who claims to have known Piguenit well.⁶ Legge noted politely that 'his disposition caused him to shrink from any controversial surroundings so that he may give undivided attention to his studio'.⁷ But in 1880 no doubt frustrated by the parochialism he experienced in Hobart Town Piguenit finally left Tasmania for good bound for New South Wales and a new beginning. Piguenit did not return to Tasmania until 1892 to present his paper *Among the Western Highlands* and later to undertake sketching tours in 1893, 1894 and 1895.⁸ Once established at his family's home at Hunter's Hill on Sydney's north shore, Piguenit co-founded the Art Society of New South Wales (ASNSW). He held various executive positions on the board becoming its vice-president in 1886. Scotsman David Henry Souter (1862 -1935) was also an office bearer within the ASNSW. At Souter's behest in 1888 a splinter group of artists formed The Brush Club with membership reserved exclusively for artists under 26 years of age.⁹ This restriction of course arbitrarily included Souter and excluded Piguenit who was by then aged in his

⁵ Yet that relationship remained largely a financial one as Piguenit paid £1 for the privilege of staying at the Du Faur's artist's camp for two months. See Dinah Dysart, 'W. C. Piguenit: 19th Century Environmentalist', *Art and Australia Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (Winter 1992), pp. 480-521.

⁶ W. V. Legge, 'W. C. Piguenit: An Appreciation of a Tasmanian Artist', reprinted from *Tasmanian Mail* (TGPS, Hobart 1914).

⁷ Legge, *Piguenit*, p. 7.

⁸ Tony Brown suggests that Piguenit also went to Tasmania to visit friends; Tony Brown, *personal communication*, Hobart, March 2012.

⁹ Entry for David Henry Souter', Dictionary of Australian Artists online available at <<http://www.daa.org.au/main/read/5852>>, last accessed 31 August 2010.

early 50s and perhaps considered to be more of a father figure than a true colleague of the younger members. The mantle of father and teacher sat uncomfortably for Piguénit. His stern manner distanced him from the younger men. Tensions began to grow within the Art Society between the society's older professional artists like Piguénit and the amateur artists such as Souter and his small clique of Brush Clubbers. The younger cohort led by Souter formed a breakaway faction in early 1902 naming it the Society of Artists. As tensions continued to grow in the New South Wales arts community between Piguénit and the younger cohort of Souter, Tom Roberts and Arthur Streeton and others in the Brush Club, *The Mercury* in February 1897 paraphrased an article presented in reference to the Art Society's most recent exhibition in Sydney in October the previous year. The writer for *The London Magazine of Art* noted that the exhibition ought to have been called the "Piguénit Exhibition", but also in striding to Piguénit's defence wrote somewhat disparagingly of;

[T]he Impressionist school, which at present seems to be considered high art by a few in Tasmania, an authority of art of high standing in New South Wales writes of the present pseudo-impressionistic craze that of late years has been started in Australia - "I can see nothing like it in the admirable French pictures which we have in our Sydney Gallery and certainly nothing like it in the realms of nature".¹⁰

Such a critique was typical of the arch conservatives in their vilification of the new style of Impressionism. Much of this criticism centered on making distinctions between the high art of exquisite detail and finish and the low art of a higher than usual key of tonality and the use of daubing to diffuse background detail. These last qualities are abundant in the landscapes, seascapes and urban cityscapes of the Heidelbergers although not authentically reproduced according to Robert Hughes.

¹⁰ 'A Tasmanian Artist Appreciated', *Mercury* (Hobart), 16 February 1897, p. 2.

Arguments over this kind of aesthetic ambivalence seems to mirror the ambiguous relationship between Australia's British heritage and emerging modes of nationalistic sentiment, and expression. Hughes wrote in 1970 that the Heidelbergers 'did not truly embrace Impressionism'.¹¹ Comparing Roberts, Streeton and McCubbin to the likes Rupert Bunny, George Lambert and Emmanuel Phillips Fox for example and this seems true enough. But Hughes' enunciation of anxiety wrapped up in nationalistic pride suggests a keen sense of historical hubris rather than regret, a position best expressed at the time by a writer in the *Sydney Morning Herald* who noted:

Without presuming to argue that there is yet such a thing as an Australian school of art, as there is a French and Italian school, it is surely permissible to express a hope that the distinctive character and colour and incident of life and nature in Australia are sufficiently marked in their own way to justify marked artistic treatment. In a new country like this, where the natural features are so different from the old-world models which artists have copied for generations, it is at least to be expected that the artistic possibilities would be recognized at any rate by those artists who claim to be Australian.¹²

Indeed it was just this kind of critique that emerged from circles outside the various factions of cliques extant amongst artists that compelled Roberts, Streeton and others to depart the ASNSW and form their own. For Roberts and the other Heidelbergers it would be the theme of labour and its association with nature that would provide the affront to Piquenit's regressive landscape vision. Souter's group suffered more from the split being forced to amalgamate once more with Piquenit's Art Society of New South Wales to form the Royal Art Society of New South Wales in June 1902.¹³ Piquenit retired from the Royal Art Society of New South Wales in 1903 yet continued undeterred to exhibit there. Differences that appeared to have formed over the new vogue of Impressionism in fact went far deeper than matters of aesthetic

¹¹ Robert Hughes, *The Art of Australia* (Penguin, Crows Nest 1970), pp. 51-70.

¹² *Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney), 1 July 1893.

¹³ See Appendix B for details.

dissonance. Piguenit's stern refusal to adopt its realism at the expense of Romanticism's atmospheric sublimity indicated a characteristic stubbornness that had and would plague Piguenit his entire life. Brown and Johannes state that Piguenit never came to terms with the Impressionism practiced by many of the younger members of the Art Society of New South Wales.¹⁴ Brown and Johannes also say that there is little evidence to support a claim, similar to what is being made here, that Piguenit left the ASNSW because of his aversion to Impressionism. They suggest that Piguenit merely wished for a quieter life away from the personal jealousies being exhibited amongst Sydney's artistic fraternity. For this Brown and Johannes cite Legge's obituary as they also cite a critique of Piguenit's latest work offered by Souter. This critique by Souter and the circumstances leading up to its production goes some considerable way to describing and explaining Piguenit's manner and character as recounted by a contemporary, but, also, offers a different possibility to that suggested by Johannes and Brown. Whereas Tasmania's declining cultural proclivities had provided something of a hedge between Piguenit and artistic criticism the move to New South Wales and his boldness in tackling an icon of Australian nationalism exposed Piguenit to the harsh glare of public and professional opinion as we shall see.

Unlike any other artist at the time Piguenit rejected the compositional standards of the day. As an older and more accomplished artist at the time Piguenit seems to have been reluctant to dispense with the artistic formula which had seen him rewarded with a number of much-needed commissions from amongst a small clique of sympathetic followers in his home state of Tasmania but relatively little more than

¹⁴ Christa E. Johannes and Anthony V. Brown, *W.C. Piguenit, 1836-1914* (Beagle Press/Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart 1992), p. 33.

expressions of ambivalence from amongst his peers. As one of the few highly active landscape painters in the late 1880s and 1890s, most other artists choosing illustrations and portraiture to earn a living, Piguénit quite often was “last man standing” when it came to handing out awards for landscapes executed in oils at ASNSW exhibitions.¹⁵ Whilst he maintained an abiding reliance on Romanticism It might be said that Piguénit painted his landscapes like a Tasmanian. This might seem a disingenuous claim to have made but it can be substantiated. Piguénit’s reputation for persistence and stubbornness earned him wide recognition both in a positive and perhaps a negative sense. He sensed his difference from his contemporaries, a difference honed and brought to maturity in Tasmania’s South-West.

Despite making his first appearance in an exhibition in Melbourne at the Metropolitan Intercolonial Exhibition in October 1866, Piguénit was not at all popular in Victoria. Piguénit’s relationship with the Victorian public soured when Piguénit forwarded his six lithographic pictures collectively entitled *Salmon Ponds, the Vicinity of New Norfolk, Tasmania* to *The Argus* in the expectation that the newspaper would pay him a commission for their reproduction as inserts in the periodical for which patrons would pay a small subscription.¹⁶ The newspaper’s editorial committee promptly returned the booklet. Piguénit exhibited his own paintings in Melbourne on only two occasions; once in March 1877 and again in April 1882 both times at the Victorian Academy of the Arts.¹⁷ On the second occasion *The Argus* was particularly hostile toward Piguénit reporting with characteristic churlishness that his *Mount Wellington, from New Town Bay* was a ‘pleasing composition, but impresses us too

¹⁵ See Appendix B.

¹⁶ *Argus* (Melbourne), 28 February 1868, p. 4.

¹⁷ See Appendix B.

slight, and is not searching enough in treatment'.¹⁸ The final ignominy came for Piguenit when in August 1888 at the largest exhibition of arts, craft and industry yet seen in the colonies, the Melbourne Centennial International Exhibition, *The Argus* reported Piguenit's father Frederick Le Geyt as an exhibitor, not to mention the obvious error, and, despite the fact that Frederick had died almost two years before.¹⁹ After that Piguenit had nothing more to do with the *The Argus* or the Melbourne art scene.

Amongst Sydney-siders though the response was entirely opposite. An example of the favour which he was shown in Sydney is apparent when one of his largest works *Mount Kosciuszko, 1903* was unveiled (Figure 5).²⁰



Fig. 5: W. C. Piguenit: *Mount Kosciuszko*, 1903

Image Courtesy the Art Gallery of New South Wales

¹⁸ 'The Victorian Academy of Arts', *Argus* (Melbourne), 25 March 1882, p. 13.

¹⁹ *Argus* (Melbourne), 9 October 1888, Special Supplement: Melbourne Centennial Exhibition, p. 49.

²⁰ William Charles Piguenit, *Mount Kosciuszko* (1903), Art Gallery of New South Wales.

Piguenit had been commissioned for the work by the Sydney Gallery of the Art Society of New South Wales for which he received £200 to defray his expenses including the employment of a personal guide to assist with navigating to the mountain's most pleasing aspect.²¹ Piguénit in his original submission for the commission spoke of his endeavour to refuse the mountain's more pleasing aspect along the route constructed by the New South Wales Public Works Department. Piguénit told readers of the *Sydney Morning Herald* that he wanted to capture 'the steepness of the mountain, its deep ravines and immense rents in the mountain's flanks'.²² Piguénit wanted the mountain to exhibit its own grandeur. But Piguénit also wanted his work to be memorable. With financial matters having already been taken care of Piguénit seems freed in this painting from the strictures of patronage. In this pursuit Piguénit imposes a sublimity upon the mountain landscape that would belie its status as Australia's tallest peak. Unconquered and imposing, Piguénit's image glares back at the viewer taking in the very aspect of Eugene von Guerard's *North-east View from the Top of Mount Kosciusko, New South Wales, 1867*²³ looks out from. Whilst von Guerard's picturesque composition smooths out the landscape as his party of 'four expeditioners'²⁴ look out passively across the composed unity of the picturesque confection, Piguénit's jaw-like outcrop of rocks to the right of his composition sound a warning to the would-be traveller. But in particular it is the depth of field the artist creates that posits an enormous gulf between the viewing position and the mountain. It is this isolation of the central subject that gives the painting its enormous representational value. The mountain stands alone breaking free from Piguénit's

²¹ William Charles Piguénit, *Design & Art Australia Online*, available at <http://www.daaio.org.au/bio/william-charles-piguénit/#artist_biography>, last accessed 29 May 2012.

²² *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 March 1903, reprinted in *Mercury* (Hobart), 1 April 1903, p. 7.

²³ Eugene von Guerard, *North-east view from the top of Mount Kosciusko, New South Wales* [picture], [Melbourne : Hamel & Ferguson, 1867] 1 print : lithograph, hand col. ; image 32.5 x 51 cm. National Library of Australia.

²⁴ The artist, German scientist Georg Neumayer and three guides. The painting excludes the artist of course as we look from his perspective. See Tim Bonyhady, *Images in Opposition; Australian Landscape Painting, 1801-1890* (Oxford University Press, Melbourne 1985), p. 61.

deliberately insufficient rendering of foreground and therefore breaking the image entirely free from the moorings of the picturesque landscape convention. This was certainly no tourist image but can be read as perhaps a reflection on Piguénit's growing sense of isolation from the art world, which we will come to shortly. Piguénit did not have to please a patriotic zealot with this painting of the national mountain monument. For Piguénit, this commission must have been a heartening reminder that art-for-arts-sake could still be produced despite a burgeoning desire amongst artists to inscribe a humanistic narrative upon the landscape. Whilst the viewer of today might project a touristic or environmentalist reading upon Piguénit's landscapes, the impression is, moreover, one of nature's sublime power, and humanity's insignificance. This juxtaposition, seen as regressive at the fin de siècle, points to Piguénit's deliberate style, his refusal to bow to public sentiment, his stubborn refusal to accept that his method was an outmoded one. Piguénit's skill apparent in his immediacy with nature, apparent in *Mount Kosciusko*, was forged in Tasmania's wilderness areas.

Piguénit had trekked to the mountains around Mount Kosciusko for the second time in the summer of 1902-03 to make preparatory sketches for his painting of the "Roof of Australia". His association with Kosciusko and its environs stretched back twenty years to when Piguénit first arrived from Tasmania to live in New South Wales. Between 1880 and 1883 Piguénit made sketching excursions to Penrith and the banks of the Nepean, the Hacking and Cook's Rivers in the south, Albury, and the Tintaldra-Towong area in the Valley of the Upper Murray from where he caught his first glimpse of the great mountain.²⁵ The *Sydney Morning Herald* was, in 1883, among the first to report on Piguénit's progress remarking almost breathlessly on

²⁵ Johannes and Brown, *Piguénit*, p. 44.

Piguenit's 'superlative style' and his 'splendid compositions' which were a 'triumph of perspective' and that Piguénit's decision to move to Sydney had saved the artist from becoming a mannerist.²⁶ This must have seemed like warm praise to Piguénit. Although he received similarly glowing appraisals back in Tasmania there must have remained that inescapable sense that he alone represented the sole contribution of artistry from the island. But in painting the national monument Piguénit had exposed his vision of how the symbol of national unity ought to be represented to national opinion. Clothing the mountains of Tasmania's mysterious South-West in fog and drizzle may have seemed metaphorically correct to many a casual observer. But to cloke the nation's highest peak in a similarly gloomy shroud was always going to expose Piguénit to strong opinion. Souter was amongst those least impressed by Piguénit's unique apprehension of the mountain's character. In an article from *Art and Architecture* of which Souter was co-editor between 1904 and 1911 and reprinted in Hobart's *Mercury* on 9 January 1906 Souter strikes a seemingly conciliatory note following the rift that occurred in the ASNSW which led to Piguénit's resignation from the RANSW earlier in 1903. Souter claims that Piguénit 'transcribes' rather than interprets nature and that such a 'direct method' ought to place Piguénit at the 'forefront of artists' in Australia among those who seek such reference to nature.²⁷ Here is a none-too-subtle reminder of Piguénit's "Achilles heel" as it were; his so-called photo-realism. Souter's canny attack was based in the sort of theoretical considerations given to photography by those who sort to make high art-low art distinctions between photography and painting. Souter saw Piguénit as most decidedly practicing the latter. Essentially, Piguénit's direct method led to exactitude

²⁶ Excerpt from *Sydney Morning Herald* in *Mercury* (Hobart), 3 April 1883, p. 2. Also see Appendix B for a description of works produced from Piguénit's initial tours in rural New South Wales.

²⁷ 'William Charles Piguénit: an Australian Painter', by D. H. Souter, reprinted in *Mercury* (Hobart), 9 January, 1906, p. 8.

in his work that Souter found distasteful because of its mechanical nature. Unlike the camera the artist was expected to interpret nature to offer an impression of its power and spectacle and not simply attempt to capture only what the eye sees. However Souter's was but a thinly-veiled attack that reached a crescendo once he moves on to a discussion of Piguénit's *Mount Kosciusko* writing somewhat querulously that the painting is the 'least relatively convincing', that it 'does not impress the observer' and that 'commissions seldom result in the 'highest academic achievement'.²⁸ As Souter rightly points out the terrain above the tree-line of Mount Kosciusko holds little if any snow and certainly even less during the summer months when Piguénit trekked to its surrounds. But surely Souter erred in his judgement of Piguénit's "snow-clad" myth. Even the most casual glance at Piguénit's majestic mountain reveals that the patches of white are of the artist's favourite motif, clouds of mist, and not snow. This can be discerned in Piguénit's Tasmanian landscapes in which a similar treatment is given and from the monochrome series of 1887.²⁹ But the attack did not stop there, Souter adding that;

[I]t may seem strange why so capable and prolific a painter should have failed to influence current art. He walks entirely alone, reflected in no imitator, followed by no disciple. When his palette is put away for the last time we shall meet no pictures which recall his manner, and only his own works will monument his ability. To his reserved and taciturn temperament this must be ascribed. Stern, almost harsh in manner, he does not invite the confidence of the younger men, many of whom hardly know him by sight. That he so isolates himself is unfortunate, for the occasional companionship of such a conscientious nature-lover would be a liberal education for the earnest student.³⁰

Then, in his final offensive thrust, this;

²⁸ Souter, *Mercury*, *ibid.*

²⁹ *Mt. Olympus, Lake St. Clair, Tasmania; Mt. Gell, Tasmania, and Mt. King William from Lake George*; also *Hell's Gates, Davey River*, Creator: Miller, H, *Picturesque Atlas of Australasia*. Vol. II p. 496, Publisher: Sydney, N.S.W.; Melbourne, Vic; London: Picturesque Atlas Publishing Company, 1886, 1 print: wood engraving ; 22 x 18 cm, Print, Tasmaniana Library, Exact size 220 x 178 mm.

³⁰ Souter, *Mercury*, *ibid.*

[T]he naturally developed painter, innocent of academic technique, speaks a language more readily understood by his cousins, the public, although less acceptable to the cultivated tastes of his brother artists.³¹

This seems an ironic touch given Souter's own humble beginnings.³² It also shows the extent to which Souter's colleagues at the newly formed Royal Society that included Heidelberg School artists Streeton and Roberts remained expressly in two worlds.

The term "Heidelberg School" is a rather loose appellation originally applied by Bernard Smith³³, given to a number of progressive artists located in regional Victoria in the 1880s and 1890s. These artists, Frederick McCubbin, Tom Roberts, Charles Conder and Arthur Streeton among them are credited with having performed much of the cultural production required to launch and sustain the muscular nationalism which coalesced around the legendary figure of the rural pioneer in the 1880s and 1890s. Among those mounting a challenge to this view is Leigh Astbury.³⁴ Astbury has noted in his thesis on the agonistic elements of their works as having provided something of a gloss over the social upheavals of economic depression, war, racial disharmony and class conflict in a sense, deriving enormous conceptual and ideological force in a manner perhaps never intended by the artists themselves. It was the notional power of the rural myth, Astbury suggests, that of the struggle and rise of the industrious individual which provided a psychological displacement of the difficulties presented to a nation struggling to assert national values upon disparate experiences. Further to this end Aidan Davidson has commented upon the apparent anti-suburban energies of the Heidelberg School. Davidson does this by drawing

³¹ Souter, *Mercury*, *ibid*.

³² 'Entry for David Henry Souter', Dictionary of Australian Artists online available at <<http://www.daaao.org.au/main/read/5852>>, last accessed 31 August 2010.

³³ Bernard Smith, *Place, Taste and Tradition: a Survey of Australian Art Since 1788* (Ure Smith, Sydney 1945).

³⁴ See Leigh Astbury, *The Heidelberg School and the Rural Mythology*, M. A. Thesis, Department of Fine Arts (University of Melbourne, Parkville 1982); *City Bushmen: the Heidelberg School and the Rural Mythology* (Oxford University Press, Melbourne 1985); *Sunlight and Shadow: Australian Impressionist Painters, 1880-1900* (Bay Books, Sydney 1989).

attention to the fact that, via Graeme Davison ‘Australia was the most suburbanised society in the world at the turn of the twentieth century’.³⁵ It seems somewhat ironic and therefore partly deconstructive of the Heidelberg School “myth” as Astbury calls it and as Davidson argues, that McCubbin, Streeton, Conder and Roberts were attending to the exemplification of rural struggle and itinerancy away from the city which made the economic bulwark of suburban home ownership seem desirable on one hand whilst seemingly reminding a burgeoning suburbia of its “lost” economic independence and freedoms on the other. Davidson’s contribution is an important one in understanding the temper-of-the-times surrounding the Heidelberg School. He notes how the artists mounted the nation’s ‘socio-natural essence’ upon a reverence of the colonial tradition yet simultaneously forming a thoroughly modern metaphysical relationship to that tradition that would ‘facilitate federation’.³⁶ The lone pioneer so often at the thematic centre of their works both enjoyed the tranquility of the bush whilst keeping the city within easy reach. Tim Bonyhady has partially rejected this reading of the energies of the Heidelberg School. In particular Bonyhady reminds the reader that whilst the prevailing taste in the 1880s, outside of Tasmanian it seems, was for ‘Australian landscapes seen by Australian eyes’ and painted that way that Roberts and Conder were Englishmen not Australians.³⁷ From the perspective of Bonyhady’s argument, simply “being there” in the Australian bush was not quite enough. Without explicitly identifying what it is about being born in Australia, or more specifically in Piquenit’s case in Tasmania, which would allow an artist to grasp a more profound meaning of the scenes around him or her Bonyhady nevertheless maintains a latent defence of this unspoken quality. For Piquenit though it was the

³⁵ See Graeme Davison, *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne*, 2nd Edition (Melbourne University Press, Carlton 2004).

³⁶ Aidan Davidson, ‘Australian Suburban Imaginaries of Nature: Towards a Prospective History’, *Australian Humanities Review*, Issue 37 (December 2005), available online at <<http://www.australianhumanitiesreview.org/archive/Issue-December-2005/davison.html>>, last accessed 21 August 2006.

³⁷ Tim Bonyhady, ‘Lake Pedder 1871’, *Island*, Issue 55 (Winter 1993), pp. 17-21.

close proximity of the Tasmania's restrictive mountainous geography that so delighted him. Like J.M.W. Turner (1775 – 1851) in England Piquenit shared a romantic love of dramatic mountains and peaks.³⁸ Piquenit can be considered a late-Romantic artist at a time when the Romantic movement had well passed its apogee. The art scene in Australia was making a hasty departure away from depictions of the Australia landscape as hostile and inhospitable. This shift in aesthetic demand gathered considerable pace towards the end of the nineteenth century.

By this stage life in the bush was already becoming established as something of a counter-narrative to life in the cities along the Australian coast and an important way in which urbanites mediated their comprehensions of the vastness of the Australian continent. The bush was increasingly portrayed as less an obstacle to progress but a necessary part of it. As such the images of Australian landscapes we have at hand from the period demonstrate a process of sanitisation where the bush is no longer portrayed as 'worked or lived experience' as Ian Burn has suggested³⁹, but rather as an idealised image that reflected the sentiments of the majority of the Australian population towards its autochthonous self. Landscape painting provided a ready-reference and functioned as a kind of mnemonic for what constituted the contemporary aspirations of settler-colonists. Landscape painting at this time displays a didacticism in that the imposition of a human element upon the landscape was adopted as the dramatic element in Australian landscape depictions; the Australian landscape became the setting for heroes. As the scope of landscape works decreased the narrative of human experience in the bush increasingly took over the role of the icon in Australian landscape painting. Rather than the panoramic mode of graphic

³⁸ A trait that Piquenit perhaps picked up from Scotsman Frank Dunnett with whom Piquenit worked at the Lands Department. See Roslynn Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions: Landscapes in Writing, Art and Photography* (Polymath Press, Hobart 2006), p. 154.

³⁹ Ian Burn, 'Beating About the Bush: the Landscapes of the Heidelberg School', in Anthony Bradley and Terry Smith (eds.), *Australian Art and Architecture: Essays Presented to Bernard Smith* (Oxford University Press, Oxford 1980), pp. 83-98.

representation that dominated the earlier part of the century the artist's vision was self-consciously limited to a narrative composition where the bush formed the context for series of human experiences of the conscious and sub-conscious.⁴⁰ Where once the scale of landscape art provided the human drama now it was people themselves represented whose experiences were written upon the landscape in dramatic fashion. Such a narrowing focus upon the lives of people of the bush seemed to inscribe an empathetic relationship between city and country. The works of Tom Roberts, Frederick McCubbin, Charles Conder and Arthur Streeton in particular bear the rudimentary beginnings of the vague concepts of egalitarianism, mateship, democracy and nationalism to which many critics have suggested the Heidelberg School owes its continued popularity.⁴¹ At times of internal and external crisis the values attributed to the works of the Heidelberg School artists were added to and built upon such that a totalising discourse of national unity and independence could be built on misapprehension and false belief. Yet this national delusion carried enormous ideological weight such that what was fashioned was a burgeoning Australian self-consciousness and coherent form of conservative nationalism.

What Piquenit may have considered was merely the passing vogue of Impressionism was less a radical faction of art but rapidly under the guidance of the young artists of the Heidelberg School becoming a truly representative national art form.⁴² Piquenit persisted in painting in a style very similar in its stern contrasts and heightened perspective to that put forward by Caspar David Friedrich (1774 – 1840) in Germany and in the immersive surreal qualities exhibited by Turner in England

⁴⁰ A washed-out, non-descript background is a perceptible trait in much of the Heidelberg School paintings that arguably dissolves regional particularity behind a dream-like veil.

⁴¹ Burn, 'Beating About the Bush', pp. 96-97.

⁴² The debate as to whether or not this reading amounts to a patriotic fantasy or is merely representative of their collective popularity continues.

(Figure 6). Turner was one of the first landscape artists to paint *en plein air*, outside literally in the landscape.



Fig. 6: J. M. W. Turner; *Loch Coruisk, Skye*, c. 1831

Image courtesy National Galleries of Scotland

So it is inevitable that his influence should be reflected in the national school of art that was the *plein airiste* Heidelberg School. This can be seen in some of Turner's sea-scapes where he represents no land mass at all, the viewer seemingly immersed in the atmosphere Turner creates because what mattered to Turner was the mood, the emotional atmosphere in his work. The same technique was employed by Piguénit in his *Mount Kosciuszko*. The graphic use of atmosphere by Turner can be seen to resonate throughout the works of many of the artists present in the Van Diemen's Land colony but none more so than Piguénit. Significantly it was the close proximity of the island's restrictive mountainous geography which so delighted its native son. Like Turner, Piguénit shared a romantic vision of dramatic mountains and peaks. It was the island's mountains which provided such a natural alternative to the peopled landscapes emerging out of the Victorian goldfields featuring the itinerant bush worker and the illustrious travails of the explorer. In this regard it seems safe to suggest that Piguénit indeed saw Tasmania as quite distinct from the colonies and states. Piguénit exemplifies a much unexplored contiguity between colonial

landscape artists and a famous contemporary in Turner. Piguénit was but one artist who substituted the ivy-covered centuries-old ruins of the English Lakes District of Turner with a deep-time geological antiquity captured in the abundant hills, peaks and mountains of Van Diemen's Land. Much like Turner's cathedrals, Piguénit's peaks bore testament to what some might call the glory of the divine in nature.

If Turner remained an inspiration to Piguénit in his youth then the omnipresence of novelist Marcus Clarke in his representations of Van Diemen's Land and Tasmania also appears to have had a remarkable effect of Piguénit's later artistic praxis.⁴³ This effect was detected and considered at the time by a writer in review of the Piguénit's illustrative contributions to the *Picturesque Atlas of Australasia* in 1888 who wrote that:

Tasmania is the subject chosen, a colony with reminiscences often beautiful, often terrible, always picturesque. Readers of Marcus Clarke's masterpiece "His Natural Life" will remember the wonderfully vivid series of scenes, from full-length landscape portrayed with the broad brush.⁴⁴

If a painting can become an emblem of a mentalité then Piguénit's brooding solitude manifest in both his personality and in his paintings falls within the reaches of Marcus Clarke's shadow in the guise of his *For The Term of His Natural Life* of 1874. Clarke wrote at a time when the proportion of 'currency lads' and free settlers had begun to outweigh transportees and emancipists yet his depiction inveighed on the very real lived identity of not just emancipists but upon those who, like William Charles Piguénit, were descended from convicts. Such personal identification with a convict past remained not only unfashionable but highly problematic for those who

⁴³ Roslynn Haynes has most notably argued this point. See Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, op cit, *passim*. Also Richard Flanagan, *A Terrible Beauty: History of the Gordon River Country* (Greenhouse, Richmond 1985), *passim*.

⁴⁴ 'Review', *Brisbane Courier*, 29 September 1888, page 4.

were, unlike the novel's anti-hero Gabbett based on real-life prison escapee Alexander Pearce (Pierce), not only not Roman Catholic but were neither cannibals nor habitual criminals either. Pearce, or Gabbett, encapsulated the sensual world of the Irish Gaelic tongue, the fearful illiterate bonding to the Latin Vulgate, the implied perfection of barbarism, and the dichotomous world of homosocial bonding taken to its ultimate extreme in Pearce's horrific perversion of the Eucharistic communion.⁴⁵

William Charles Piguenit quite literally wandered in the wilderness in search of his own Romantic communion with nature. There he would have been able to draw on his ancestor's own wanderings, forced into exodus, outcasts of an increasingly corrupt Catholic France. Worse than being derided as a descendant of convict stock perhaps, Piguenit was unable to make common cause with Clarke's sensationalised depiction of the stereotypical convict experience. In Piguenit's time wilderness-as-adversary became a more stable motif with which to underwrite colonialism than a wilderness desired for its virginal properties. Clarke was empowered to write in 1876 of the Australian landscape's 'weird melancholy', in particular the mountainous zones like those scattered across Tasmania, with their 'greatness of solitude', their 'black gorges' and their 'primeval forests'.⁴⁶ Never far away though, even in Clarke's Anglophone negativity, is a lingering romanticism of the emotion not the genre. In Australia in the late nineteenth century this ambiguity manifested in a wilderness sought out both for the awe-full grandeur of the sublime and the awful presence nature unbounded by colonialism's proprietorial interests. This would leave but one alternative framework within which to conceive of wilderness at this time. That is of a wilderness set aside from colonial progress as a mnemonic of Protestant piety.

Here, Piguenit wish to subvert himself to the austerity of the life of the track-cutter,

⁴⁵ Pearce is said to have cannibalised his companions.

⁴⁶ Marcus Clarke, 'Preface', in Adam Lindsay Gordon, *Poems* (E. W. Cole, Melbourne 1929), pp. vii-xiv.

remote from civilisation, immersed in nature, compliant to its demands. The toil required in this wild landscape existed in the sheer exaltation of work without reward beyond, in Pigenit's case, the covenant that existed between the artist and nature, man and God. The decision to completely abandon transportation and convictism to Van Diemen's Land by 1853 ultimately encouraged Pigenit and other artists to produce both picturesque and sublime landscapes without either Aborigines or convicts in them. A growing distaste for convictism thereby marginalised the forced labour of convicts to the extra-societal fringe. Artists similarly marginalised the activities of convicts out of their frame of reference.⁴⁷ It was the results of convict labour exemplified in the picturesque that enthralled. For Pigenit the visible signs of the removal of the Aborigines from the sublime would be the chief selling point of his Van Diemonian landscape art and perhaps his point-of-difference amongst the wider colonial art scene. It would seem then that Pigenit's endeavour was as much to provide a counterpoint to the gothic notions made manifest by Clarke of Van Diemen's Land as a land deemed fit for only recidivist criminals and untamed savages. The basis for this belief exists in an art form that relied upon the occlusions, of removing Aborigines, convicts and free settlers from his landscapes, that Pigenit himself not only practiced but which similarly excluded him from societal reckonings on the colony's future. With the land-acquiring opportunities of the first few decades of colonisation having locked up vast tracts of land and 'secured it into the hands of a tightly-knit oligarchy'⁴⁸ the frontier in Van Diemen's Land was becoming an experience caught in the past. So too the perceived exoticism of the island's Aboriginal Nations was becoming a fading memory rather than an anthropological wonder. No longer would the Romanticism of landscape art array Aborigines as

⁴⁷ Jeanette Hoorn, *Australian Pastoral: the Making of a White Landscape* (Fremantle Press, Fremantle 2007), p. 44.

⁴⁸ James Boyce, *Van Diemen's Land* (Black Inc., Melbourne 2008), p. 257.

noble and ignoble savages but more as ghostly spectres of colonialism's most brutal phase. And with the increasing assimilation of the convict into the wider population that in itself would no longer be refreshed with British miscreants the island was less able and perhaps there was less inclination amongst its people to provide the starkest of contrasts between a land of purgatory and one of promise. Although Piguenit is said to have been triumphant in his ability to capture with natural fidelity the scene before him his paintings offer no less a transcription of his own mediated vision than any other artist. Piguenit painted the Tasmanian landscape with the knowledge that Clarke's historical fiction had created a wider expectation that Piguenit might produce something uncanny and something weird. When Piguenit finally unveiled his *Mount Kosciuszko* he did not disappoint those who held this view. Landscape art has never rested in an unmediated vision of nature. On the contrary, landscape is only ever mediated. The Heidelberg School attracted the populist sentiments of the new nation through appeals to egalitarianism and the virtues of the lone pioneer albeit with the cultural dissonance such easy associations invite. On the other hand these artists retained their debt to the Royal Academicians in England. For the Heidelberg School artists, their radicalism did not exclude them from seeking patronage from the establishment, their bohemianism did not exclude an entrée to high society and official functions. Their collective desire for an artistic pedigree had them caught somewhere between an antipodean version of England's Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood much loved by art philosopher John Ruskin, the first such group of artists, from the 1850s, to paint *en plein air*, and the deeply affective realism of provincial life captured so superlatively by the Frenchman Jules Bastien-Lepage (1848-1884) and his followers at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts whom the Heidelberg artists, and coincidentally Piguenit, deeply admired. However, Piguenit's almost gothic mood

that he struck so courageously with his treatment of the national symbol of Mount Kosciusko is more Ruskinian. Piquenit's grotesque mountain conveys nature's distortions as sublime in their capacity to both terrify and excite the viewer. It may be said that Piquenit painted the nation's tallest mountain like a Tasmanian. At least, he painted the mountain like the rest of the nation might have imagined a Tasmanian would.

Piguenit's Conservation Ethic – Fact or Fantasy?

Piguenit wrote but one dissertation that may be considered to have touched on conservation matters. Entitled *Among the Western Highlands of Tasmania*¹ the article was published and presented in the form of a lecture given to the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, Hobart meeting in 1892. This document, as it is, is Piguénit's sole contribution to conservationist discourse. Much has been made of this document in relation to Piguénit's espoused conservationist credentials in particular where Piguénit describes the scenery he and the rest of the party encountered on the 1871 and 1874 excursions. However the primary weakness of this document is that its content is largely the result of direct quotes of the recollections of the same excursions by James Reid Scott in 1871 that appeared in Hobart Town's *Mercury*,² and Robert Mackenzie Johnston in 1874.³ Strangely, Piguénit chooses Scott's words to describe the scenery of the South-West in place of his own words whilst the illustrations in *Among the Western Highlands* made by Piguénit are in black and white yet the artist bemoans the want of the 'aid of colour'. Jonathan Holmes⁴ has observed that Piguénit's choice of monochromatic oils in making the illustrations for this lecture was a matter of technical convenience and expediency. It is Holmes' contention that Piguénit's originals were photographed onto photosensitive woodblocks allowing for reproduction in *Among the Western Highlands* as well as for the *Picturesque Atlas of Australasia* published from 1886 to 1888. Further curiosities beyond this emerge from *Among the Western Highlands*. When Piguénit quotes Johnston's rescue of a 'fallen companion' the suspicion is the companion was Piguénit. Where Piguénit speaks of fording the Picton using

¹ W. C. Piguénit, 'Among the Western Highlands of Tasmania', *Transactions of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science*, Hobart Meeting, 1892.

² James Reid Scott, 'Arthur Plains and Port Davey: to the Editor of The Mercury', *Mercury* (Hobart), 5 April 1871, pp. 2-3.

³ Robert Mackenzie Johnston, *A Systematic Account of the Geology of Tasmania* (J. Walch & Sons, Hobart 1888).

⁴ Jonathan Holmes, 'In Black and White: W. C. Piguénit's Monochrome Paintings and the Imaginings of the Tasmanian Wilderness in the "Picturesque Atlas of Australasia"', *Kanunna*, Vol. 3 (2008), pp. 1-12.

Johnston's words it seems likely that 'one of our number' as Johnston put it and as Piguénit quotes who almost drowned whilst crossing the swollen river having perhaps lacked the courage to traverse a makeshift bridge, a fallen eucalypt, may have again been Piguénit.⁵ Why? Because it seems peculiar that Piguénit would make mention of what might otherwise be a couple of unremarkable events in what was meant to be a scientific paper and not an opportunity to incite mirth. In *Geology of Tasmania* Johnston admits freely of his narrow escapes from drowning in another episode. It might be supposed given Johnston and Scott's level of expertise in the bush and that of the other men in the group two of whom were employed specifically for their bush skills that Piguénit may have been the least skilled and perhaps then the most likely to encounter difficulties. Piguénit's sketch *Crossing the Picton* which appears as one of several Piguénit illustrations for Johnston's *Geology of Tasmania* shows five men making their way along the fallen log to cross the river though there were six men in party. For Piguénit both journeys appear to have been arduous for in his own words Piguénit describes progress as 'slow and toilsome' he writes of 'fighting the formidable scrub' and generally of the hard and hazardous struggle both parties undoubtedly encountered. But that Piguénit would only use his own voice to recount the less positive aspects of both journeys is perhaps a neglected facet of the study of this document. It raises the question as to how much Piguénit enjoyed his sojourns into the South-West.

There is nothing to indicate Piguénit's state of physical fitness other than the casual remarks made by his companions. But these remarks offer crucial testimony to the nature and character of Piguénit if not toward his physical condition *vis* bushwalking abilities. On the occasion of his first excursion into the South-West in

⁵ Haynes is wrong in suggesting that the tree Piguénit and his companions used to cross the Picton in 1873 merely 'fell over'. See Haynes, *Visions*, op cit, pp. 154-164.

1871 Piguénit was aged 35 years but by 1887 and the occasion of his fourth such journey he was aged 51. Scott would have issued the rest of the party with instructions that Piguénit was not to perform the labours of a bushman, recalling that on the occasion of the 1871 expedition when Piguénit was still an office-bound public servant that Piguénit's purpose in joining the expedition was to simply 'transfer the scenery to canvas' and to 'get the benefit of plenty of air and exercise' and not to carry heavy equipment or to cut firewood.⁶ James Backhouse Walker gives account of Charles Percy Sprent's 1887 expedition to Tasmania's west coast in the book *Walk to the West*.⁷ The book offers many fine examples of sketches and watercolours Piguénit made on the expedition. Among Walker's observations are those of Piguénit's misfortune in having blistered feet and the artist's decision to leave the expedition and turn back just a few days into the excursion.⁸ Piguénit, by his own admission, was not a particularly competent bushman relying heavily on the skills in that regard, of others.⁹ To make matters worse Piguénit suffered from severe and persistent insomnia which no doubt added to the fatiguing effect of traversing the difficult country between the settled districts and the South-West.¹⁰ Piguénit remained inclined to refer to himself not as an explorer but as both an artist and a tourist when in a letter to *The Mercury* upon his return from Sprent's 1887 excursion to the west coast he noted that:

The knowledge acquired by these explorers leads me to venture the opinion that, as facilities are increased for examination of this little known region, the "western highlands" of Tasmania, will in a, perhaps, not far distant future, be as attractive to the tourist as the

⁶ James Reid Scott, 'Arthur Plains and Port Davey', *Mercury* (Hobart), 5 April 1871, pp. 2-3.

⁷ James Backhouse Walker, Michael Stoddart (ed.), *Walk to the West*, (Artemis, Hobart 1993).

⁸ Walker, *Walk to the West*, pp. 27, 31.

⁹ Piguénit recounts his awe at Scott's abilities as a bushman in *Among the Western Highlands*.

¹⁰ In an article 'The Hypnotic Cure', *Examiner* (Launceston), 17 August 1905, p. 6., Piguénit is said to have been cured of the complaint.

famed Blue Mountains of New South Wales or Sounds of New Zealand.¹¹

Piguenit left very little in terms of personal effects and recollections. Nothing is left of what thoughts he shared with a few close friends and family and what chance there was of preserving his personal papers and even some precious glass-plate negatives was lost in the execution of his will as was Piguénit's dying wish.¹² As for Piguénit's own thoughts on conservation and other matters the dearth of primary materials has proved a significant hurdle toward the objective of understanding both him and his art. Some considerable reliance is made in this thesis upon contemporary accounts found in the newspapers and periodicals of the day as already seen. In this regard the National Library of Australia's print digitisation program has led to the provision of an online searchable collection of the bulk of the nation's newspapers and pictorial periodicals up to 1954. Known as Trove, this collection has proved invaluable in this research reducing the task of locating articles related to Piguénit. At the end of this thesis readers will find a chronology of events the information of which is sourced from the Trove collection. But unfortunately much of the material appearing in the newspapers certainly in regard to biographical detail is repetitious. Thankfully there is but one Piguénit diary, one scrapbook and a small collection of letters written to and received from a distant relative in England, all of which are held by the Mitchell Library at the State Library of New South Wales. The letters were written by Piguénit to his cousins Frances and Caroline in England from early 1886 until shortly before Piguénit's death in 1914. Beginning with Frances' letter to Piguénit in February 1886 the correspondence had commenced following the Indo-

¹¹ W. C. Piguénit, 'The Western Highlands of Tasmania', *The Mercury* (Hobart), 24 September 1887, p. 3. The article summarises the lecture of the same name where again Piguénit quotes Scott also making a clear distinction between himself as an artist and tourist while acknowledging Scott's abilities as expedition leader.

¹² Bill Gaskins, Biography: William Charles Piguénit, *Design & Art Australian Online*, available at <http://www.daaao.org.au/bio/william-charles-piguénit/#artist_biography>, last accessed 23 May 2012.

colonial Exhibition held in London in January that year at which Piguenit exhibited.¹³ Piguenit's cousins Frances and Caroline had attended the exhibition and upon seeing the name of the artist and recognising how the surname was not a common one decided to contact Piguenit and began exchanging information about the family and its origins. During this correspondence it can be seen where Piguenit's mind is turned to conservation matters during the height of the summer of 1889. His nephew Frederick George Piguenit was a pastoralist who was occupied trying to grow tobacco and maize in the Darling Downs region of what is now the country straddling the country north of the New South Wales border and south eastern Queensland during a devastating drought in the summer of 1890. But less than sixteen months later the same region was struck by some of the worst floods in nearly thirty years. Piguenit recalls how his nephew's crops were devastated and his livelihood ruined by floods the severity of which exceeded anything since 'the beginning of white settlement'.¹⁴ Piguenit insightfully suggests that the fault at the heart of his nephew's financial ruination lay not only with the climactic conditions being experienced throughout the region but also with the Queensland Department of Agriculture whom, Piguenit wrote, had supplied his nephew and other pastoralists with non-drought resistant seed from Algiers and France, and yet also that the same seed ought have characteristics which might make it resistant to mould as a result of excessive humidity and rain.¹⁵ But Piguenit, in the months leading up to the devastating floods of April 1890 went on to state that the boom-and-bust succession of drought and flood gave ample evidence to necessity of a water conservation and irrigation system. His words were prophetic. Piguenit's prophecy inspired him to paint his most famous and successful sequence of paintings; what might be "Flood" series of the 1890s. The Darling

¹³ W.C. Piguenit (herein, WCP) to Frances, 14 December 1886, p. 3.

¹⁴ WCP to Frances, 26 April 1890, p. 2.

¹⁵ WCP to Frances, 18 October 1889, p. 2.

Downs flood of 1890 would remain a favourite subject for Piguenit culminating in his painting *Thunderstorm on the Darling* winning for him the Wynne Prize¹⁶ for landscape in 1901 awarded by the Art Gallery of New South Wales (Figure 7).¹⁷



Fig. 7: W. C. Piguenit; *Thunderstorm on the Darling*, 1901

Image Courtesy of the Art Gallery of New South Wales

The Art Gallery of New South Wales with whom Piguenit had a long association and which had purchased his arguably superior “sister” painting to *Thunderstorm* entitled *The Flood in the Darling, 1890*. Previous winners of the Wynne were William Lister Lister friend of David Souter and fellow Society of Artists member in 1898 and one of the lesser-known artists at Heidelberg Walter Withers in 1897 and again in 1900.¹⁸ From 1903 onwards following his retirement

¹⁶ Held in conjunction with the Archibald Prize for portraiture. In 2010 the Wynne Prize was surrounded in controversy. Winner Sam Leach’s *Proposal for Landscape Cosmos* seems to heavily reference Dutchman Adam Pynacker’s 1660 painting of the Italian countryside *Boatmen Moored on the Shore of an Italian Lake*. Leach was reported to have disclosed his “source” of inspiration but forgot to mention this prior to submitting his painting for the Wynne Prize. It seems the public also forgot about the long and illustrious tradition of copying the works of great masters. Prior to the instantaneity of photography, this was the only means of garnering a reasonable reproduction whilst it was the most direct and least expensive way for a young artist to learn the craft. To comprehend the vehemence with which the public attacked Leach as well as an article discussing the controversy see ‘Double Dutch: Scandal Rocks Wynne Painting Prize’, *The Australian* (14 April 2010), online at <<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/double-dutch-scandal-rocks-wynne-painting-prize/story-e6frg6nf-1225853393138>>, last accessed 3 August 2010.

¹⁷ The AGNSW also holds one companion painting to *Thunderstorm* entitled *The Flood in the Darling* painted in 1895 whilst the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in Launceston, Tasmania holds one of the two pictures Piguenit painted in the weeks after his letter of April 1890 during which the floods were at their worst, entitled *Out West During the Floods of 1890 – The Gunderbooka Range, 1890*.

¹⁸ See The Archibald Prize website available at <<http://www.thearchibaldprize.com.au/finalists/wynne/>>, last accessed 3 August 2010.

from The Royal Art Society there would be no new work from Piguénit. As it is *Mount Kosciuszko* was a return to the kind of treatment found in Piguénit's illustrative monochromes for his lecture to the A.A.A.S. in Hobart Town in 1892. *Thunderstorm* and *Flood* were in some regards his valiant attempts to come to grips with a changing reality in the art world.

It is this series and *Thunderstorm* in particular which is cited as being Piguénit's most forthright expression of a conservation ethic. Unfortunately there are no letters covering the exact period during which Piguénit painted these pictures and at the time during which he was awarded the Wynne Prize. Inasmuch as Piguénit's "Flood" series may have provided substantive evidence of a personally-held conservation ethic Piguénit's letters also relate, albeit meekly, his sense of the terribleness of the floods and drought in terms of their human toll. Whilst many cattle and sheep were lost so too were human lives, Piguénit writes. In a letter to his cousin Piguénit cites not only the pros and cons of water conservation measures, but the desperate attempts of the townspeople of Bourke in New South Wales to keep the floodwaters at bay. But in other letters of correspondence to cousin Frances Piguénit also relates the crippling effects of worker's strikes such as the 1891 Shearer's Strike which followed the Queensland floods and the Broken Hill miner's strike from July to November 1892 and another earlier strike at the coal mines in Newcastle all of which led to union members being arrested by police and charged with conspiracy and incitement to riot, events which some commentators suggest brought about the birth of the Australian Labor Party.¹⁹ These events seemingly had little if anything to do with environmental or conservation issues but more to do with attempts to achieve

¹⁹ See Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rise of Broken Hill* (Macmillan, Melbourne 1968); a good comparative study is offered by Robin Archer, *Why is There No Labor Party in the United States?* (Princeton University Press, Princeton 2007).

wide-spread union membership amongst shearers, waterside workers and miners.

Piguenit though seemed oblivious to the worker's struggles when he writes;

[A] very great depression in commercial matters exists throughout Australia, which affects, in a greater or lesser degree, almost every class. This unsatisfactory state of affairs is, I think, very largely, if not wholly, attributable to the number of strikes that have taken place, during the last two or three years.²⁰

Piguenit goes on to say that the cause of the Broken Hill strike was due to a 'disagreement' with mine proprietors and that 'unwise counsel' had led to the economic disruptions caused by strike action. Blainey however tells us that what was at stake were the environmental conditions being experienced by miners and their families. Toxic mine tailings were left in enormous piles around the town of Broken Hill so that the subsequent dust, exacerbated by the dry climate, caused lead poisoning and serious skin, eye and lung disorders amongst the town populace, whilst the miners themselves were fighting for a general improvement in unsafe and unproductive working conditions as well as compulsory union membership amongst fellow workers.²¹ If Piguénit's environmental concerns were absent in this moment and on show when in Tasmania's South-West his politics seemed to be more on display at Broken Hill; his disposition there perhaps indicative of his distaste for Marxist socialism and its attendant industrial and labour reforms. In this moment, Piguénit's cry is not for the welfare of miners and their families and the desperate need for environmental controls to be implemented at the Broken Hill mines but for a 'return to prosperity' regardless of the terrible effects of the then current mining practices. It is here where an insight is given into what might conceivably be considered the typical character of conservation in the late nineteenth century.

²⁰ WCP to Frances, 1 October 1892, p. 3.

²¹ Blainey, *Rise*, p. 61.

What it seems from these letters is that conservation meant, at least for Piguenit, the correct and efficient management of the primary resources that remained at the heart of the nation's economic prosperity. Arguably, the economic crisis being experienced in Australia in 1892 was as much a product of the discouragement of working-class initiatives such as those being argued for at Broken Hill the result of which was a slow down of economic growth and the erosion of confidence in the notion of a nationalised economy. Piguenit perhaps missed what seems clear in hindsight, that is that the economic torpidity he was commenting on was a clear indicator of the sought of social problems that can emerge from environmental destruction. Taken from this viewpoint, Piguenit's supposed conservation ethic begins to appear more elitist and preservationist and far from egalitarian. But yet such beliefs in Piguenit's case remain still unproven.

Going back a few years to the 1870s Piguenit's diary gives account of expeditions taken into Tasmania's South-West in 1871 and 1875 as well as details in regard Piguenit's visit to the Du Faur artist's camp in the Blue Mountains also in 1875.²² Students of the diary will find that it contains scant detail as to anything regarding Piguenit's personal views, experiences or opinions as the diary largely serves the purpose of a field notebook to accompany his sketches. Nevertheless the diary does provide some insights into Piguenit's persona. In his diary of excursions made into Tasmania's South-West in 1871 and 1875 Piguenit makes very little mention of his companions²³ and even less about his feelings. This is fairly typical in a field notebook as details must be limited to, in an artist's case, the physical features of the landscape, the prevailing atmospheric and climactic conditions, the time of day

²² William Charles Piguenit, *Diary, February 1871 to December 1876*, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, ML MSS .2896 CY Reel 1029

²³ He mentions a few by name but only in regard to simple matters of fact, 'accompanied JRS in the boat' for example.

and other details of use back in the studio. A fuller interpretation of the diary helps us gain an insight, with the aid of further background information, as to the nature of Piguénit's artistic practice. The diary is in fact a field notebook containing information relevant to artistic practice. Piguénit like most landscape painters would take sketches of a scene and later work up these sketches into oils on canvas. The diary then provides further description of what the artist saw at the time the sketch was made. It has been asserted that the granitic geology of the mountains in Tasmania's South-West is given to erode quite differently to the basalt and sandstone of the Blue Mountains.²⁴ Piguénit selected landscapes to sketch and ultimately paint in both regions. In Tasmania's South-West the mountain peaks remain steeply angular having scarcely been changed by the extreme westerly weather over many millions of years whereas the softer composition of the peaks in the Blue Mountains being much more prone to erosion has resulted in smoother rounder peaks. Judging by his output following the move permanently to Sydney in 1888 Piguénit was indeed troubled by the altogether different task set for him by the New South Wales hinterland. So frustrated was Piguénit by the grander more open vistas of the New South Wales hinterland he was forced to subsequently return to Tasmania to sketch in 1893, 1894 and 1895. But there is little doubt that Piguénit excelled in his representations of atmospheric conditions whilst his propensity for capturing the tranquility of lakes, the outpouring of waterfalls and the turbulence of oceans is notable. His success in 1901 with *Thunderstorm* provides ample evidence that in his later years Piguénit was most comfortable when depicting large expanses of water and dramatic cloud forms. Piguénit reveled in painting reflections, the stillness of lakes providing a blank slate upon which Piguénit could practice and display his affinity for capturing natural fidelity. Like other artists both now and then Piguénit selected and

²⁴ This suggestion was made to me by Piguénit biographer Tony Brown in March 2012.

combined the elements that occupied both his memory and his purview to effect a pleasing image. To this end it would have been typical for Piguenit to make detailed notes to this effect of the scenes he sketched and these are recorded in his diary. On the occasion of a sketching excursion to Mole Creek, Tasmania in 1876 Piguenit records the enhancements he wishes to make to his sketch of Alum Cliffs:

A greyish sky with mist partly enveloping distant trees is probably the best treatment [then] show two or three prostrate trees on slopes above and below stratified rock.²⁵

The mist and prostrate trees along with bodies of water are signature Piguenit motifs. They occur relentlessly throughout his entire oeuvre. In particular the prostrate trees²⁶ he describes in the diary are what give credence to the idea that Piguenit held environmentalist or conservationist beliefs and perceptions.²⁷ But it is surely stretching beyond reasonableness to suggest that Piguenit ever considered the potentially damaging effects of running too many cattle and sheep on the land.²⁸ Where it was the case that he knew what had caused the death of the trees Piguenit was sure to make mention that ‘fire had swept’ through’ or that trees had been ‘rung’²⁹ around a camp site.³⁰ Just as likely was that Piguenit observed and thus understood that tree dieback may have been the result of periodical drought conditions but also that farming inadvertently provided ideal conditions for native possums to flourish, their effects on old growth trees more devastating than sheep and cattle.³¹ Ron

²⁵ Piguenit, Diary, 12 December 1876.

²⁶ John Glover also deployed this motif in both his colonial picturesque paintings as well as his arcadian pre-European scenes.

²⁷ Ron Radford in describing *Butts of Ben Lomond, Tasmania* describes the deathly remains of trees’ the result of ‘man’s interference with nature’. This is an erroneous view not supported by examination of the image itself. What can be seen are a number of desolate looking trees and some cattle. The foreground shows a stereotypical prostrate tree that appears to have been scarred by fire. It would be speculation therefore to suggest that the fire was the direct result of anthropogenic fire. Furthermore the suggestion lingers that any fire would have been lit not by Aborigines but by Europeans thus perpetuating the ‘human as noxious weed’ maxim.

²⁸ In fact in the letters to Frances where Piguenit mentions the drought in the Darling Downs in 1889, he talks of there being losses of ‘90,000 sheep’ in one instance and ‘130,000’ at an adjoining station without making any further comment other than to say that the pasture in the region is usually ‘luxuriant’. See WCP to Frances, 21 January 1889.

²⁹ It was common practice for holders of leases for the harvesting of logs to ring-bark the trees bordering their claim. This action would kill the tree thus sending a signal to others who sought to remove logs without holding leases.

³⁰ Piguenit, Diary, December 1876.

³¹ Jamie Kirkpatrick and Kerry Bridle (eds.), *People, Sheep and Nature Conservation: the Tasmanian Experience* (CSIRO, Collingwood 2007), p. 112.

Radford in his treatment of Piguenit discusses the painting *Butts of Ben Lomond, Tasmania* (Figure. 8) as providing an instant during which Piguenit's conservation ethic becomes manifest. Radford describes the 'deathly remains of trees' in the painting as, in his words, the result of 'man's interference with nature'.³² But this is an erroneous view not necessarily supported by examination of the image itself.



Fig. 8: W. C. Piguenit; *The Peak of Ben Lomond from the Ben Lomond Marshes, Tasmania, 1882*³³

What can be seen are a number of desolate looking trees and some cattle. The foreground shows a stereotypical prostrate tree that appears to have been scarred by fire. But it would be speculation to suggest that the fire was the direct result of human interference. Radford's suggestion thus perpetuates the 'human as noxious weed' maxim. But there is no definitive way of telling whether or not Piguenit was simply capturing the scene before him, or employing the popular motif of a fallen tree in the foreground in order to employ the technique of foreshortening in order to give depth to an otherwise flat perspective. Colonial artist John Glover frequently

³² Ron Radford and Jane Hylton, *Australian Colonial Art, 1800-1900* (Art Gallery Board of South Australia, Adelaide 1995).

³³ Johannes and Brown, *Piguenit*, p. 51.

employed the same motif and technique without attracting the same kind of conservation-minded appraisal. On the other hand, it is a well established fact that dead trees in landscapes paintings are considered to perform an iconic function; they are suggestive of the sublime forces of nature in that strong winds and lightning can kill trees, and, that God's divinity is immanent in the effects nature can be seen to have had. To isolate Piguénit's trees as a rare example of one showing concern for flora rather than adhering to the central tenet of Romanticism in painting that nature is evidence of the existence of some immense non-human power is surely a case of wishful thinking if not just simply wrong. Inasmuch as the "Flood" series is a disastrous scene both for what it suggests of the damage caused and for the wastage of water it might also offer testimony that the climactic conditions which produced the deluge were a reminder of God's biblical post-apocalyptic covenant with man. Piguénit's sublime in the "Flood" series could provoke feelings of awe, amazement and even terror, but it could also suggest divinity and spirituality. However, the overriding interpretation of Piguénit's landscapes is that they evoke wilderness. This assumes though that Piguénit had abandoned the generally understood provisions of Romanticism as outlayed above in favour of producing a secular reading of the flood event.

Still in regard to the diary, Piguénit is known to have created confections, that is of artificially made landscapes that were quite fictional in origin or at least being a combination of scenes the main elements of which were sometimes many thousands of kilometres apart and some he had never actually seen.³⁴ One might think that this kind of artificiality ought to matter given the truth claims made by those wishing to bolster Piguénit's environmental credentials to whom we shall shortly turn. Yet the

³⁴ Based on the similarities between his New South Wales landscapes and his Tasmanian ones but also in regard to images found in his scrapbook from Milford Sound on New Zealand's south island. A good example of Piguénit's "confections" can be found in *Walk to the West*. The book features reproductions of a monochrome *The Frenchman's Cap*, and also a monochrome of Mount Gell both of which feature the same foreground and figures.

diary also reveals something of Piguénit's disposition toward his experience of wilderness. In it Piguénit consistently makes mention of the weather, his phobia of snakes and the labours of others. In regard to snakes Piguénit writes on the 1871 expedition; Thursday 23 Feb: 'killed large black snake near camp'; Saturday 4 March: 'saw a large black snake, but owing to there being no stick or stone he got away; Monday 6 March "Mac" killed a whip snake'. Then when in the Blue Mountains he writes; Tuesday 21 September 1875; 'killed large snake (6 feet long) dark olive green with diamond shaped whitish spots on back – white merging into slate colour on belly'; Wednesday 22 September; 'killed small black snake'; Friday 24 September 'saw large black snake'.³⁵ If Piguénit held an aversion to snakes he also seems to have found that the weather in Tasmania's South-West made the activity of sketching particularly unpleasant in particular in Piguénit's recollection of the journey up the Davey River with Scott he comments on the weather observing that on;

Tuesday 28th, made sketch of the Davey River from the south in the morning, went up the River in a boat with Scott for almost 2 ½ miles, strong s.w. squalls with rain; Wednesday 1 March, started up the Davey River in the boat at 9am, reached Hell's Gates about ½ past 10...heavy westerly squalls with rain; Thursday March 2nd, made sketch of Port Davey from Payne's Bay, weather exceedingly inclement, wind from the westward, blowing hard with heavy showers, the usual style from the westward³⁶

Scott however recalls the day quite differently;

[O]n our visit [the water] was still and black looking and our boat glided through between the rocks while we admired the magnificent scene.³⁷

What this is pointing to is that an affinity for wilderness is not a prerequisite for a wilderness photographer or painter for that matter.³⁸ It has been pointed out by

³⁵ The snake Piguénit describes in the 21 Sep 1875 sighting is probably a Broad-headed Snake (*Hoplocephalus bungaroides*) found amongst the sand-stone escarpments in an arc 200 km west of Sydney. It is potentially dangerous, rare and is now Australia's only endangered snake. See University of Sydney website at <<http://sydney.edu.au/news/science/397.html?newsstoryid=3191>>, last accessed 4 April 2012.

³⁶ Piguénit, *Diary*, 28 February 1871.

³⁷ Scott, *Mercury*, op cit, p. 3.

Bonyhady that Piguenit found physical labour somewhat irksome taking any available opportunity to allow his companions to take up the axe, to pitch his tent, or even carry his knapsack.³⁹ Melissa Harper has added to the discussion surrounding Piguenit's bush skills.⁴⁰ Harper notes the manner in which Piguenit allows associations to be made between the likes of Scott and Sprent as genuine explorers and his own purposes. But this does not appear to be deliberate on his behalf and indeed Harper states that Piguenit adopted more the language of the 'holiday-maker' rather than that of a serious explorer.⁴¹ Yet all of this could simply be a matter of reading the evidence "against the grain". It may be the case that Piguenit desisted from cutting down trees or killing snakes himself because he was indeed concerned with animal rights and the conservation of old-growth forests and that the nature of the weather in the South-West made sketching difficult. There is however no evidence of this. Indeed where opportunity had existed for Piguenit to express a concern beyond mentioning the need for correct and effective extraction of primary resources to ensure the economic prosperity of investors and prospectors no such thought appears to have occurred to him. We know already from Scott and Johnston's accounts of the expeditions that Piguenit was not in the best physical condition and from Piguenit's own pen that he considered himself a tourist and an artist and not an explorer or a bushman.

³⁸ Jonathan Holmes, 'Resuming Our Journey into the Landscape', in *Considering Art in Tasmania* (Sam Ure Smith, Sydney 1985), pp. 502-507, reprinted from *Art and Australia*, Vol. 22, No. 4, pp. 473-532.

³⁹ Bonyhady states that Eccleston Du Faur hired a work gang to clear an area for Piguenit to setup his equipment in order to sketch the view down the Grose Valley, adding that the task was made easier when one of Du Faur's friends took up the axe to help with the early work. Bonyhady continues adding that when the rest of the party of artists invited by Du Faur to participate in the artist's camp arrived 'they spent the entire afternoon creating new views at their second camp at the junction of the Grose River and Govett's Leap Creek'. See Tim Bonyhady, 'Artists with Axes', *Environment and History*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1995), p. 225. Piguenit's diary records that on the same day he retired with 'a bad headache'. Piguenit, *Diary*, Thursday 23 September 1875. A few days later when Piguenit, Du Faur and three companions ventured to the foot of Govett's Leap Falls, Du Faur and the others 'continued their axe-work' at Piguenit's request after the artist complained that the view, although 'grand in the extreme' was obscured as there was 'too much overhead'.

⁴⁰ Melissa Harper, *The Ways of the Bushwalker: On Foot in Australia* (University of New South Wales Press, Sydney 2007).

⁴¹ Harper, *Ways of the Bushwalker*, pp. 59-67.

A companion to the diary is the scrapbook.⁴² It contains a number of various images mostly prints made from etchings displayed in an illustrated periodical, which judging by the subject matter could most likely be the *Illustrated Australian News* or indeed its Sydney variant. It is from these reproductions of scenes from classical antiquity, rather than from any teacher, that Piguénit obtained his thematic and figurative inspiration. Whilst Piguénit gained some rudimentary training in figurative drawing from his mother and perhaps some guidance in landscape sketching from his colleague Frank Dunnett at the Lands Survey Department during the 1860s Piguénit eagerly studied the reproductions appearing in the illustrated newspapers of the period observing every clearly-delineated detail of the technique of both the engraver and the print-maker. Among the other themes exhibited in the scrapbook besides classical scenes and figures are current events such as horse shows, cattle sales and Prince Alfred's visit to Tasmania in 1868. There are scenes of mineral prospectors on the Swan River in Western Australia. Piguénit's older brother Augustus Frederick operated a gold prospecting lease at Oyster Cove, Van Diemen's Land from around 1855 to 1858.⁴³ Augustus Frederick passed away in 1860 at just 26 years of age.⁴⁴ If the inclusion of mining scenes was matter of familial interest to Piguénit then its inclusion in the scrapbook is probably also a reflection on Piguénit's excursions to Port Davey where mineral prospectors sought tin following surveyor's reports which indicated that prospects for both tin and gold, were highly promising.⁴⁵ Included in the scrapbook are a number of newspaper articles written about Piguénit and his art which give a good impression of Piguénit's success both in the colonies and in Europe. These articles are also available online from the NLA's Trove collection. Of further interest is the inclusion of two identical pages taken from an unknown source

⁴² William Charles Piguénit, *Scrapbook*, 1803?-1912, PX*D 234, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.

⁴³ *Hobart Town Mercury* (Hobart), 8 April 1857, p.3; *The Courier*, 7 May 1857, p. 3.

⁴⁴ *Launceston Examiner* (Launceston), 12 January 1860, p. 5.

⁴⁵ *Hobart Town Courier* (Hobart), 1 March 1828, p. 4.

but probably a periodical. The pages feature a reproduction, indeed two identical pages from the same issue of the same periodical, of a Beattie lantern-slide of Hell's Gates, Port Davey taken probably around 1896 (Figure 9).



Fig. 9: *Hell's Gates* (Beattie)

Image courtesy the State Library of Victoria

This image is a highly curious addition to the scrapbook as a great deal of mystery surrounds its inclusion. The State Library of Victoria dates the image to sometime between 1890 and 1900. The actual date may be some time in 1896 which was the year the vessel “The Fancy”, which is named in the title of the image in Piguénit’s scrapbook, was purchased by W. J. Lindsay.⁴⁶ If this date is correct then Piguénit’s scrapbook, or at least the early pages were put together between 1886 and 1900 when the artist, aged in his mid-60s, was living in Sydney. Taken on face value, it seems possible that Piguénit would have been flattered by the Beattie image as the

⁴⁶ See ‘Late Mr. W. J. Lindsay: the Funeral’, *Mercury* (Hobart), Friday 15 February 1929, p. 8

photographer appears to have travelled to the exact spot from which Piguenit executed one of his Hell's Gates sketches. The other possibility of course is that "The Fancy" was sailed to Port Davey earlier by another skipper and therefore the date calculated from the available information is wrong. Even more remote is that the Beattie Hell's Gates image shows another vessel and not "The Fancy". Finally, hopefully without stretching credibility too far Beattie's image has been reproduced in the book *Trampled Wilderness* (Figure 10).⁴⁷



Fig. 10: Hell's Gates

Image courtesy Ralph and Kathleen Gowland

Nic Haygarth adds another facet to this uncertainty. He dates the photograph to 1898 the year in which "The Fancy" took her second voyage to Port Davey with J. W. Beattie aboard, citing an article Beattie wrote for *The Tasmanian Mail* in April 1898.⁴⁸ This would place Beattie at the scene in order to take the photograph. However, a search of the *Tasmanian Mail* photographic index lists three images of Hell's Gates none of which is the gorge on the Davey River and so the origin of Piguenit's two copies of Beattie's Hell's Gates remains uncertain. Nevertheless the image is a highly

⁴⁷ Ralph and Kathleen Gowland, *Trampled Wilderness: the History of South-West Tasmania* (Richmond & Sons, Devonport 1975), p. 62

⁴⁸ See Nic Haygarth, *The Wild Ride: Revolutions That Shaped Tasmanian Black & White Photography* (National Trust of Australia (Tasmania), Launceston 2008), pp. 10-11.

curious addition indeed given that Piguénit made sketches of the scene Hell's Gates both from land (Figure 11) and from on the water during the 1871 expedition



Fig. 11: W. C. Piguénit; *Hell's Gates, Davey River, 1871?*

Image courtesy National Gallery of Australia

What is not clear is why Piguénit should include two identical pages of the same image from the same publication of Beattie's lantern-slide. Although the scrapbook has not been subject to any significant historical appraisal the implications of why Piguénit might have retained photographs of the Hell's Gates scene are relatively major given the suggestion made by some of the following commentators that Piguénit may have copied his paintings from photographs, or indeed that some of his paintings are in fact photographs on paper which Piguénit simply embellished with his brush and palette. At this point it is appropriate to make some more specific observations of the manner in which academic and other commentators have related to Piguénit and his art before broaching the subject as to the likelihood that some of Piguénit's most celebrated works were those of a copyist and not a *plein air* painter.

One of the major criticisms if not more common assessments of Piguénit's landscapes are that his work may be the result of copying the photographs of professionals such as John Watt Beattie or the Spurlings.⁴⁹ The *Launceston Examiner* commented on the acquisition by a Piguénit patron C. W. Joscelyne of a painting of the Third Basin at the Cataract Gorge in Launceston stating that Piguénit's treatment of the scene was 'admirable...though executed from a photo'.⁵⁰ The question is one not of separate and distinct art forms but of claims to factuality based in the distinction between human subjectivity and photographic fidelity with nature. Arguments both for and against photography as an art form have been around since the invention of the photographic process.⁵¹ Most of these tend not to deviate from a notion of the camera as provocateur for a re-interpretation of art forms but stressing the importance of the essential difference between artistic originality and scientific reality. But the main thrust of the argument is that the rapidity of photographic reproduction of the scene has been considered by the scientific world to encapsulate the idea of veracity. Piguénit faced such criticism throughout the length of his artistic career. His colleague at the Royal Art Society of New South Wales David Souter was one who argued that such veracity can be turned against the photographic process in order to argue the case in favour of painting as being a more affective response to emotional stimuli. The ease of scenic apprehension that the camera affords might appeal to those seeking mere prosaic visual replication Souter thought, because, as the adage suggests, the camera does not lie. It is worth exploring this facet of Piguénit's work more closely as some considerable argument has coalesced around the question

⁴⁹ Johannes and Brown admit to the possibility. See Christa E. Johannes and Anthony V. Brown, *W. C. Piguénit, 1836-1914* (Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart 1991). Haynes notes 'the strong sense of verisimilitude, even photographic realism'. See Roslynn Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions: Landscapes in Writing, Art and Photography* (Polymath Press, Sandy Bay 2006), p. 163. John McDonald is the most direct stating 'Piguénit was one of the first Australian artists to use photographs as a reference to his paintings'. McDonald goes on to say how Johannes and Brown played down this facet of Piguénit's technique McDonald adding that 'Piguénit's landscapes have that hard, unnaturally crisp atmosphere one associates with photographically-based painting'. See John McDonald, *Art of Australia: Vol. I: Exploration to Federation* (Pan Macmillan, Sydney 2008), p. 218.

⁵⁰ *Launceston Examiner* (Launceston), 4 October 1904, p. 4.

⁵¹ A point well made by Christine Burgess, *The Spurling Legacy and the Emergence of Wilderness Photography in Tasmania*, PhD. Thesis, University of Tasmania (2010).

of whether or not Piguénit used photographs to obtain his much celebrated realism and fidelity with nature.

Gael Newton's *Shades of Light: Photography and Australia 1839-1988* is a valuable resource for those commencing a study of photography in Australia. This text contains a number of references to Piguénit in regard to his activity as a photographer. Newton of course strikes the same difficulty in that there are no extant examples of Piguénit photographs although the diary contains a list of locations, dates and times of photographs he took in 1873 at Lake St. Clair. Given that Piguénit was little more than a photographic hobbyist as he seemed to use photographs as visual records of the scenes he sketched it is understandable that Newton pays little attention to his pursuits in this regard.⁵² The counter argument to suggestions that Piguénit made his landscapes as mere copies taken from photographs whether taken by him or by someone else is that he must have possessed a photographic memory.⁵³ Such an observation is a matter of speculation and conjecture yet if this was the case would it have been necessary for Piguénit to make such detailed notes, including noting the time of day on his sketching tours to the South-West as those found in the diary? A further counter argument to claims of copying is that the photographic process of the day was imperfect and lacked the precision necessary to capture the atmospheric effects Piguénit represented so well making such a process a technical impossibility.⁵⁴ Studies of the photograph executed by Beattie of Hell's Gates⁵⁵ and which Piguénit had in his possession⁵⁶ indeed shows the sky to be a shapeless blank. But this suggests

⁵² Some dates are incorrect and Newton's references direct the reader to secondary sources.

⁵³ Tony Brown, personal communication, 28 March 2012.

⁵⁴ Brown, pers. comm., 28 March 2012.

⁵⁵ The nomenclature "Hell's Gates" has unofficially been given to at least four gorge-like features in Tasmania namely at, the (in)famous Macquarie Harbour, the Forth River near Sheffield, the upper reaches of the Derwent River past New Norfolk and Port Davey on the South-West coast.

⁵⁶ Two copies perhaps from an unknown source but perhaps the *Illustrated Australian News* or its Sydney version (although this has not been investigated) are contained in Piguénit's scrapbook held at the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Call Number: PX*D 234.

two possibilities. For one we know from the diary Piguénit oftentimes invented the clouds, mists and fogs in many of his images as these were his signature motifs. We also know that Piguénit kept detailed field notes in the diary that he made on his excursions recording physical features. The question becomes, was the invention of atmospheric effects and the reliance on field notes necessary to augment photographs either Piguénit himself or Beattie had taken, projections of which the artist could have used to copy his landscapes from? It is known from the diary that Piguénit was proficient in the photographic technique⁵⁷ and that he took several photographs on the excursion to Lake St. Clair in 1873 of the same physical features found in his illustrations for the *Atlas*.⁵⁸ Even photographic memories fail and diminish over time. We know Piguénit made field notes as occasional reminders of what he thought would make a pleasing addition to the original scene he saw most probably because like most other artists he did not wish to rely on memory alone.⁵⁹ The photographs Piguénit took on the 1873 expedition served the same purpose. Those photographs were aides-de-memoire. But the possibility needs to be admitted that prints of Piguénit's photographs could have been embellished by him then photographed once more onto photo-sensitive wooden blocks which could then have been used to make numerous reproductions in the *Atlas*, a process Jonathan Holmes has already demonstrated Piguénit knew.⁶⁰ On the balance of evidence the probability is high that on a few occasions Piguénit traced images of objects that perhaps were never there. The Piguénit scrapbook held in the Mitchell Library contains a sheet of tracing paper adjacent to a print of a lithograph probably taken from the *Illustrated London Times*. The print features two swans and it is clear that they have been traced onto the

⁵⁷ Roslynn Haynes states that Piguénit was student of Hobart photographer Alfred Bock and that 'photography was to remain a valuable asset in [Piguénit's] career both as an "aide memoire" to his painting and to record his finished pictures'. See Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, op cit, p. 155.

⁵⁸ Piguénit's diary provides title, time and date details for a number of photographs Piguénit took on this excursion no extant examples of which have been found.

⁵⁹ Piguénit writes himself a reminder that stems of trees should be painted 'the usual grey'. Diary, 12 December 1876.

⁶⁰ Holmes, In Black and White, op cit, p. 10.

translucent tracing paper thus adding to the suggestion that the artists liked to trace. Appearing in the *Picturesque Atlas of Australasia*, Vol. II p. 518 in 1886 is a print taken from a wood engraving which in turn comes from a Piguénit monochrome of Mount King William and which features two black swans occupying very nearly the same postures as those found in the scrapbook. A discrepancy occurs between the image just described, an image with the same title featuring the exact same perspective of Mount King William in the *Among the Western Highlands* paper four years later and a monochrome oil also of same scene held by the National Library of Australia.⁶¹ These images do not feature swans. No doubt once Piguénit moved to Sydney in 1880 the memories of that first excursion into the South-West and particularly Hell's Gates in 1871 were growing dim.⁶² Piguénit was entirely familiar with a variety of printmaking methods including photolithography.⁶³ Holmes has cast his own doubts on the 'faithfulness' of Piguénit's landscape representations. In his article Holmes perhaps inadvertently uncovered the fact that there exists numerous irregularities between Piguénit's original monochromes produced in the 1880s which in turn were made from sketches he took in 1871. Holmes points to the difference between Piguénit's original monochromatic painting of *The Butts of Ben Lomond* and the print of an etching of the same appearing in the *Picturesque Atlas of Australia*.⁶⁴ He notes that the employment of a photosensitive woodblock from which numerous copies could be made would have afforded Piguénit the opportunity to make corrections to the original image which included the extraction rather than the

⁶¹ W. C. Piguénit, *Mount King William from Lake George, Tasmania*, 1887, Call number: PIC R5349 LOC OPD 37, collection National Library of Australia

⁶² As Haynes points out Piguénit did not return to the subject of Lake Pedder until 1892 when called upon to provide illustrations to his own lecture to the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science conference in Hobart in that year.

⁶³ A process Johannes and Brown state he learned from Frank Dunnett with whom Piguénit worked at the Survey Department. Probably Piguénit learned both photography and the photolithographic process from professional photographer Alfred Bock who occupied premises in Hobart between 1855 and 1858. Chris Long who is the foremost historian of photography in Australia states that Bock produced many photographically-based paintings and was especially proficient at disguising the photographic beginning of his paintings. See Chris Long, *Tasmanian Photographers: 1840-1940* (Tasmanian Historical Research Association/Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart 1995), p. 18-19.

⁶⁴ Holmes, In Black and White, pp. 9-10.

addition of fallen logs and other signs of human intrusion in *The Butts of Ben Lomond*. Finally, Holmes notes the cropping that has taken place between the original monochromatic *Hell's Gates* painted from sketches made in 1871 and the printed image found in the *Atlas* some 20 years later. Piguenit has two images of Beattie's *Hell's Gates*⁶⁵ in his scrapbook but none of his own. Holmes points out that artists would often use photographs, and where necessary embellish them with additional details and that these embellished photographic illustrations were then provided to the engraver.⁶⁶ But without a definitive means by which to date the Beattie images it is not possible to state that Piguenit traced those too. There is little assistance to be found elsewhere in this regard. In all likelihood Piguenit did work up images that had been photographed embellishing physical features with the aid of the brush, cropping the edges so as to heighten the precipitous quality of the scenes he favoured. But this method was not uncommon amongst those who were predominantly painters.⁶⁷ It was also not unusual for landscape artists to paint in black and white oils in the 1880s in Australia. The *Atlas* was a pictorial celebration of

⁶⁵ Appeared as an illustrations to J. W. Beattie, 'A Yachting Trip to Port Davey', *Tasmanian Mail*, 30 April 1898.

⁶⁶ Holmes, 'In Black and White', p. 8.

⁶⁷ Norwegian born Knut Bull (b. 1811 – d. 1899) had come to Hobart Town in 1847 when outdoor photography was both new and flourishing. When Bull arrived, reportedly with some intentions to add photography to his copyist's skills, Tasmanian scenes were amongst the first captured anywhere in the colonies as daguerreotypes were enthusiastically embraced as the ideal medium for capturing natural scenes. Hobart's Mount Wellington was becoming the favoured view. The process was becoming more commercially available with plates, chemical baths and the daguerreotype cases themselves being offered for sale in Launceston, Tasmania in 1854. An entire vernacular was developing of "Daguerrian" views and artists, and "Daguerreans", an appellation applied it seems to those with a casual interest in the technique. It is under these conditions that Bull's realist technique developed. Bull soon left the island to rejuvenate his flagging artistic career, ending up returning to his old craft as a copyist. The Sydney Morning Herald reported on 5 March 1864 how Bull would 'effect enlargements of carte de visites', or postcards using a camera obscura technique to simply trace the image or by reflecting the image onto photographic paper, a more expensive and time-consuming technique. Little was heard of Bull thereafter. Similarly effected was English-born artist Henry Gritten (1818-1873). Gritten had been a genuinely successful artist in his native country exhibiting throughout London and spending three years from 1850 to 1853 in America painting landscapes on the Hudson River in the years before emigrating to the colonies. Once in the colonies Gritten reportedly operated a photographic studio at Campbell Town in Tasmania's north from 1860. Gritten's painting technique followed photography's realist claims. His Nicholson Street, Fitzroy, 1864 genuinely captures the scene with ease, perhaps suggesting that this image was copied using a lens and reversing mirror to produce an image upon paper in the manner of the camera obscura, as used by Bull. Contrast this image with an earlier one, Hobart, 1857 and it becomes clear that Gritten struggled with problems presented to the artist of foreshortening and proper perspective, which seem beyond this artist's grasp. But this may have not been altogether the artist's fault. Hobart was one of Gritten's genuine attempts to strike a balance between the pictorial realism photography's eminence urged and the latent desire amongst viewers for sublime landscapes that seems particularly pervasive in Tasmania at this time. This work was rejected for entry to the Hobart Art-Treasures Exhibition in 1858. Gritten, like Bull struggled to gain acceptance to the peculiar artistic milieu in Hobart Town. Both of Gritten's images can be view on the Picture Australia website at <<http://www.pictureaustralia.org.au>>, last accessed 18 June 2012.

the centenary of European settlement in Australia.⁶⁸ Hobart's *Mercury* conveyed a great sense of excitement as the publishers sought subscriptions to fund the expected £60,000 outlay for the first edition.⁶⁹ The *Atlas* would be a truly international undertaking as the Anglo-Canadian publishing consortium Cassell & Co. enlisted the services of a former British war office draftsman-lithographer to supervise a team of American engravers.⁷⁰ They were joined by many of the foremost artists in the colonies including Piguénit and fellow Art Society of New South Wales colleagues Frederick McCubbin and Englishman Tom Roberts. *The Mercury* of 16 May 1889 reported that it had received the latest dozen issues numbered 28 to 40 earlier that week.⁷¹ Issue 28 featured five of Piguénit's monochromes although *The Mercury* reported only those of Mount King William and Frenchman's Cap in the *Atlas* of the five he had displayed in Hobart in September 1887 at the Hood Gallery and which he would use as illustrations at the A.A.A.S. meeting in 1892. As Jonathan Holmes points out, there was a very practical basis to Piguénit's monochromatic oils.⁷² The black and white images could be much more readily reproduced onto photosensitive woodblocks allowing for thousands of reproductions. To some degree Piguénit's inclusion in the *Atlas* certainly points to his eminent skill and ability as a landscape painter. But it might also suggest the need to make the *Atlas* a truly national publication in that Piguénit as a Tasmanian represented the sole contribution to the *Atlas* from the island colony. Piguénit's monochromatic oils of Tasmania's South-West Piguénit painted from approximately 1887 to 1892 are among the most provocative and influential among his quite expansive artistic oeuvre.

⁶⁸ Tony Hughes-d'Aeth, 'History by Installment: the Australian Centenary and the "Picturesque Atlas of Australasia, 1886-1888"', in Julie F. Codell (ed.), *Imperial Co-histories: National Identities and the British and Colonial Press* (Rosemount, London 2003), pp. 219-241.

⁶⁹ *The Mercury*, (Hobart), Friday 29 January 1886, p. 2.

⁷⁰ *Mercury*, *ibid.*, p. 2.

⁷¹ 'Picturesque Atlas', *The Mercury* (Hobart), Thursday 16 May 1889, p. 3.

⁷² Holmes, 'In Black and White', p. 2.

In the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart hang five of a set of eight monochromes Piguenit painted in 1887, two of which are reproduced below (Figures 12 and 13).

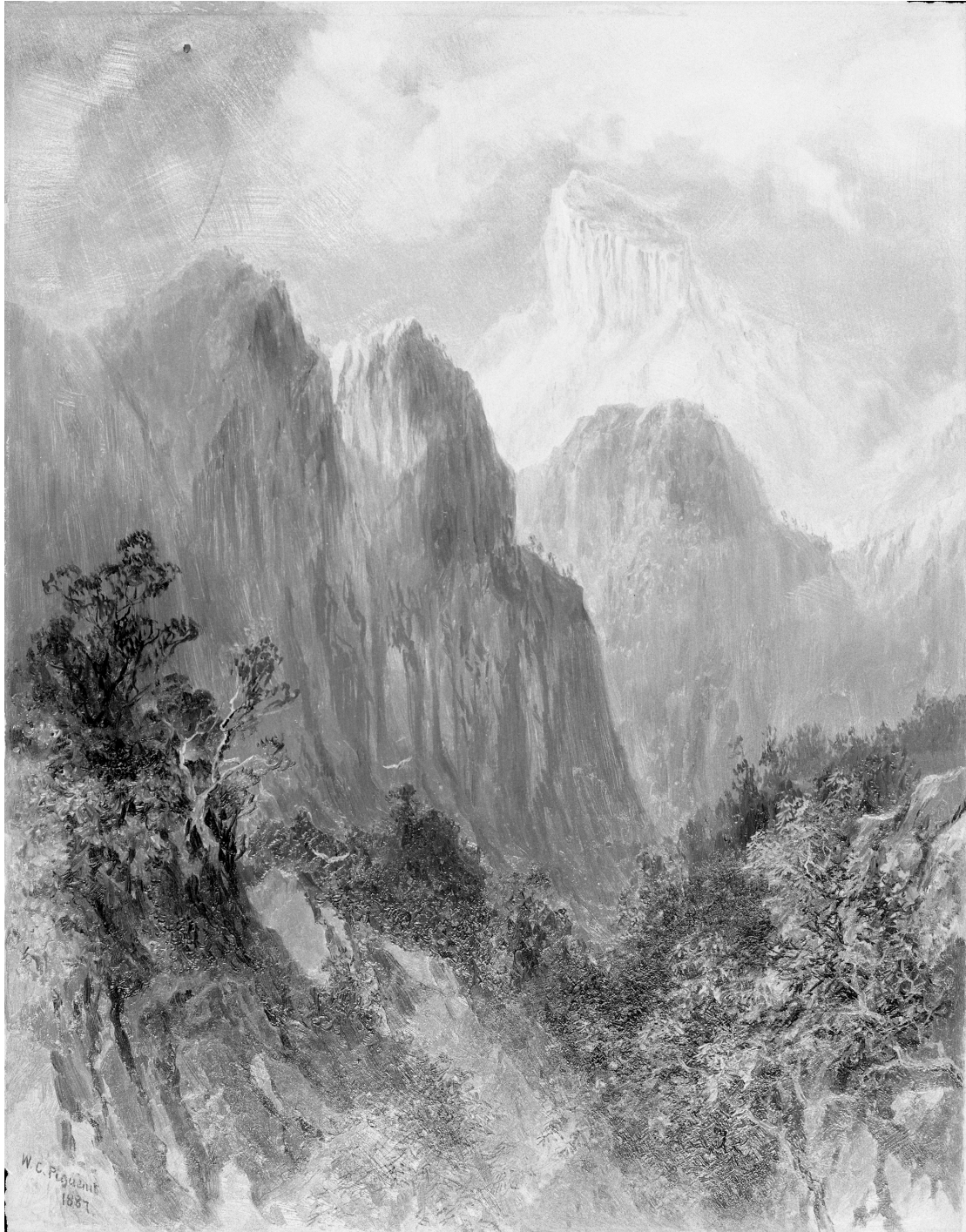


Figure 12: W. C. Piguenit; *The Frenchman's Cap, Tasmania*, 1887

Image courtesy LINC Tasmania

The monochromes worked up in black and white oils were produced from sketches made on Piguenit's excursions into the Tasmanian wilderness between February 1871 and February 1887.



Fig. 13: W. C. Piguenit; *King William's Range*, 1887

Image courtesy LINC Tasmania

Working feverishly to complete the monochromes, Piguenit showed them at an exhibition of five of the monochromes on display at the R.L. Hood gallery in Elizabeth Street, Hobart in September 1887.⁷³ Piguenit would later produce the complete set including three additional monochromes as illustrations for his lecture *Among the Western Highlands of Tasmania* given to the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science (A.A.A.S.) fourth general meeting in Hobart in 1892.⁷⁴ In the audience that night was Lady Hamilton, wife of the then Governor of Tasmania, Sir Robert Hamilton. It was at Lady Hamilton's suggestion that the set be purchased by the government for posterity. Sir Robert presented a petition to the next sitting of parliament where a resolution was passed to purchase the set out of the public purse for the sum of £100.⁷⁵ Finally, Governor Hamilton presented the monochromes to the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery on the eve of the 50th

⁷³ *Mercury* (Hobart), Friday 16 September 1887, p. 2.

⁷⁴ See the lecture reprinted from the Transactions of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, Hobart Meeting, 1892, available from the National Library of Australia, MEN 1475 item 2099.

⁷⁵ 'A Veteran Artist, Mr. W. C. Piguenit, Tasmanian Scenery', *Mercury* (Hobart) Thursday 25 April 1912, p. 6.

birthday celebrations of its parent organisation, The Royal Society of Tasmania founded in 1843. It is these paintings that have been used by conservationists and historians alike to argue both for the virtue of a conservation ethic in general and that Piguénit ought to be considered a conservation pioneer because of the manner and style in which he painted the South-West wilderness. Whilst promoting tourism indeed seems to have been part of the intended purpose behind Piguénit's presentation of his works as a supplement to the *Among the Western Highlands* lecture it must be remembered that Piguénit's illustrations not only captured the aesthetic qualities of the South-West, they gave a true impression of the geology of the region and thus provided much useful detail to mineral prospectors and land speculators. As beautiful and evocative as these images are, there remains little doubt that Piguénit's illustrations performed the function of a well-presented investment prospectus.

It is hopefully by now apparent that Piguénit, having spent a good portion of his career both as a government surveyor and an artist in the service of science, was perhaps not so enamoured with wilderness and not so committed to a conservation ethic as has previously been suggested. Science, in this case, was the estimations and calculations attendant to trigonometry which when harnessed to geology and botany became the three cornerstones of a fully developed lands survey. Piguénit's function in that setting was indeed environmental, but in the sense that his illustrations broadened the scope and meaning of what we might have understood environment to have meant in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Piguénit understood that the South-West was a unique environment and that humankind would seek to synthesise both the natural and the built environment as much as possible. His illustrations gave evidence as to what prospective settlers would encounter in the South-West; a beautiful landscape that also posed some serious challenges to the then current

technologies associated with settlement. So although Piguenit painted Romantically his purpose or rather commission was to embellish the dry facts of such field surveys, to add a human affective element to the work, to present the “total” environment to would-be prospectors and government officials. There exists no evidence at all to suggest Piguenit held philosophy as a useful tool with which to dissect and express his own experience in the South-West. Yet if philosophy was not Piguenit’s intellectual tool to forge meaning out of wilderness then perhaps History was.

Conclusion

William Charles Piguenit: History Painter?

William Charles Piguenit has been called everything from “the father of Australian landscape painting” to a 19th century conservationist. We have seen the difficulties that are presented when such statements are accepted *prima facie*. This thesis had its genesis in a refusal of the orthodoxy of such assessments. The simplicity of drawing a historical trajectory from Piguenit’s personal apprehension of an arresting visual scenery toward a much wider recognition one hundred years later of wilderness conservation proved an irresistible subject of study and verification. As it has turned out such simplicity had been obscuring a serious lack of historical attention to the matter. And in the process William Charles Piguenit had almost been forgotten. Piguenit should be considered, if needed, the father of Australian landscape painting. His talents were honed not in the Royal Academy in London but in Tasmania’s rugged South-West. The very character of the wild and unforgiving country impressed its own aesthetic values on him such that formal training would have been of little use to him. The many hours spent translating from memory and sparse notes the subtle and elusive hues and textures of the Tasmanian landscape produced a painter without peer. William Charles Piguenit simply painted Tasmania’s South-West as only a Tasmanian could.

Piguenit’s self-appointed task was to adorn the dry scientific facts and fiscal considerations of men - the surveyors and prospectors - whose task it was to open up the vast tract of country between the settled southeast of Tasmania and the harbours of the island’s west coast. Piguenit’s glistening quartzite peaks were not, I have argued, intended as a clarion call to conservationists of future generations. Surveyor Charles Gould’s mounted prospecting expeditions in Western Tasmania following the River Derwent travelling to the north of Lake St. Clair in 1859 and in a direction due

east of Macquarie Harbour in 1862 in search of precious metals chiefly silver and tin. Gould's travels indeed added to the extant geographical, and geological, knowledge of the region between Macquarie Harbour and the source of the Derwent at Lake St. Clair. But it was Piguénit's sketches, drawings and paintings from Sprent's 1871 expedition which he accompanied which illuminated the region of the South-West for the first time.

The discovery in 1871 of rich tin deposits at Mount Bischoff to the distant north of Macquarie Harbour led enthused promoters and prospectors to sink enormous sums of money into chasing similar riches in the unproven value of trace deposits of precious metals found by Gould a dozen years earlier. From 1876 for the price of a shilling promoters and prospectors could purchase a lithographic copy of Piguénit's chart of the Western Districts which was a compilation made of the course of Piguénit's three expeditions into the South-West of geological, mineralogical and geographical information collected during the Gould and Hellyer expeditions, and the Scott and Sprent expeditions in which Piguénit participated. Piguénit's first major exhibition as a professional artist in Sydney in March of 1875 featured many images worked up from drawings he took on these journeys; from Mount Wellington a few miles from the Hobart GPO, along the Cracroft River where it meets the Huon to the mouth of Port Davey along Tasmania's wild southwestern coastline. Piguénit's admiration for the sparkling quartzite veins that marbled the Arthur Range acted as a beacon to mineral speculators and promoters who, without the artist's graphic detail, would have been perhaps less inclined to speculate on the potential for mineral exploration in the region. Few profitable lodes were successfully assayed apart from those Mount Anne and Federation Peak. Nonetheless news of the presence of quartz

in the region's mountains which Piguenit's charts and illustrations showed revived enthusiasm for a Victorian-style gold rush.

Such was the level of interest that toward the end of the nineteenth century many small operations littered the region. Encampments and tiny settlements of small-scale mineral prospecting operations could be found usually working the tributaries of the Cracroft, Huon and Picton Rivers with pan and shovel in search of gold. However the difficulties of re-provisioning the camps and the families which occupied them either by sea and then overland from Port Davey or inland from Hobart Town was to provide an insurmountable barrier to large-scale mining operations. Yet despite playing a substantial role in charting and graphically describing the South-West with his landscapes Piguenit perhaps also knew that without permanent roads and homesteads the region was doomed to perpetual cyclical abandonment. European settlement would follow, but on a much shorter time-scale, the migratory occupations of Aboriginal peoples into the region being forced into retreat by climatic and geographic conditions yet beckoned by some quality which seemed to exceed hardship, and, economic imperatives.

The principal weakness in attempts to tether Piguenit's aesthetics to conservationism arises simply from his prolificacy. In travelling so widely and documenting his travails with a burgeoning portfolio of landscape drawings and paintings Piguenit showed that wilderness was ubiquitous in Tasmania, that it was everywhere and therefore not unique or rare and thus not really a wilderness at all. This is a critical distinction because the whole notion of wilderness turns on its rarity. But it must be remembered that this understanding of wilderness is historically contingent and therefore subject to variation over time. Yet it is widely accepted that

wilderness ought to be remote, undeveloped and ecologically unique all of which are increasingly rare characteristics in the modern world.

Piguenit's paintings were created to convey information as simply as possible. The information Piguenit was transmitting was the overall impression of the landscape as an adjunct to scientific data. If the surveyor's words described the difference between this species of tree and that form of mineral deposit then Piguenit's illustrations graphically described the landscape not to transmit any esoteric value but to transmit information and to show what such country looked like. In this regard far from expressing a love of nature or wilderness Piguenit's landscapes were bereft of emotional value. What emotion is registered is in the eye of the viewer and remains subject to not only the vicissitudes of history but to contemporary values given to a wilderness that was as much a barrier to economic potential then as it is, arguably, a portal to spiritual enlightenment today.

On the other hand an argument can be sustained that Piguenit was a Progressive, painting wilderness long before it became a rare commodity and before wilderness became a motif of environmental conservation. If indeed Piguenit was an enlightened enthusiast for environmental values his artistic outlook was to cling grimly to a rapidly receding Romanticism that had more to do with a personal resistance to the passing of artistic genres, to the rise of fashionable vogues and with the clash of individual personalities than with environmentalism. Piguenit's unshakeable intent to maintain his majestic view of nature was perhaps both his strength and weakness. This unshakeability brought him considerable success and earned him a reasonable living as an artist. But he remained a lonely individual throughout his entire life jealously guarding his artistic ability as many artists turned their backs on landscape painting instead taking to illustrating periodicals and

newspapers whilst photography fulfilled the desire for portraiture and for landscape representation as the likes of J. W. Beattie and the Spurlings exemplified in Tasmania. Piguenit seemed intent on capturing a lonely primitive feeling in his landscapes that arguably came as much from his inner thoughts rather than from anything he saw. Piguenit never painted Aborigines. He did not bear witness to the destruction of Aboriginal lifeways as did John Glover. But we must not judge him by this obvious occlusion. Piguenit's weakness lies in that apart from a few undistinguishable and somewhat whimsical characters usually occupying sail boats in his coastal views and seascapes his paintings feature few human figures at all. The artist seemed uninterested in the human form. So it would appear, if taken on face value, that Piguenit's landscapes were simply untrue; they aesthetically erased all traces of millennia of human activity. Yet it is perhaps more accurate to suggest that figurative painting was not a strength. The paradox remains that Piguenit provided illustrations for the survey which ultimately encouraged human activity in the sparsely-settled South-West. Yet his landscapes remained bereft of human characters with only the merest signs of human activity being shown. In this regard he was stubbornly at odds with, or even isolated from, the artistic milieu he found himself in. Yet perhaps the answer is that Piguenit's landscapes needed to look empty in order to serve as an invitation to the viewer to insert him or herself into that picture. Without a bold human presence in his landscapes a viewer might just imagine themselves in the picture.

One clear purpose of tethering Piguenit to the conservation movement has been to both advertise the collections of his works held by various cultural institutions as well as to provide the conservation movement with a visionary pioneer. This thesis has less explicitly suggested that the subject or "speaking positions", to borrow a term

from social anthropology, of those mounting these claims ought to be considered as having skewed this appraisal of Piguenit as being in possession of a particular fondness for the Tasmanian wilderness. This thesis has shown that the bulk of research and study conducted into the artist's life and works comes not from historians but from museum curators; in other words those with a vested interest in advertising their institution's collection of works by Piguenit. Indeed by investing Piguenit's works with a conservationist ethic the artist's oeuvre is brought within the orbit of the contemporary political debate surrounding forestry and other contemporary conservation practices in Tasmania. In this fashion Tasmania's government-operated cultural institutions, primarily the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery and the Allport Library and Museum of Fine Art in the south and the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in the north of the state both of which hold significant collections of Piguenit's paintings, maintain a relevance within the wider community through a process of connecting contemporary values and debates with historical ones. This is an inspired and positive move that brings Piguenit's magnificent landscapes sharply into focus and which reminds Tasmanians of the rich legacy this sometimes forgotten artist has left for us today, even if such a manoeuvre is a little transparent in its motives if not mildly irresponsible in terms of historical authenticity.

Two modes of historical analysis namely art history and environmental history have been employed in writing this thesis. Whilst the first sub-discipline is a well-practised one both in Australia and throughout the world, the latter, environmental history proved somewhat problematic. Environmental history has had a profound effect on the way settler societies such as Australia's reflect on human interactions with the natural world, especially since the instigation of the colonial moment.

Environmental history has frequently turned to colonial artistry not only to supply empirical evidence of cause and effect chains since Europeans arrived in the New Worlds but also to draw a virginal baseline under native populations as a “year zero” from which to mount arguments and theses in regard to the deleterious effects non-native populations have had on the New Worlds. But this has meant that environmental history has maintained a particularly narrow focus on colonial landscape artistry where art appears as little more than a historical litmus test of colonial attitudes and responses. It therefore became necessary in this thesis to broaden the scope of environmental history to incorporate more fully the notion of environmental determinism where the environment in turn affects human responses.

Rather than taking Piguénit’s landscapes as evidence of ecological damage and loss his oeuvre can also be seen to illustrate the attempts of late-nineteenth century colonists to harmonise both the built and the natural environments. What Piguénit was illustrating was the point that “environment” was much more than a narrowly determined site for a contest between human societies and natural ecosystems. From Piguénit it can be seen that his environment was one that included not only physical geographies but the human geographies of economic, social, familial and spiritual attachment to land and country. Whilst it has become fashionable to lament the highly extractive economies of the past Piguénit was companion to a notion of conservation as a long-term well-managed process of “wise use” natural extraction and of assuring that economic benefits could continue to flow from such processes. But the model of conservation that Piguénit probably unconsciously followed was not one which entirely dismissed physical beauty from its considerations. Had Piguénit lived for just a few more months he would have witnessed the incorporation of the Scenery Preservation Board in Tasmania whose

function it was to identify especially beautiful and aesthetically-pleasing tracts of country and then to make recommendations to government to ensure that such lands, and human-built structures of the past, were preserved as they were found.

At the heart of this thesis is a discussion of the cultural milieu in which Piquenit lived. Little consideration has previously been given to the broader cultural, social and economic factors of Piquenit's time, most notably the effect of belonging by birth to the emancipist class. For Andrew Inglis Clark convictism was something to triumph over as much as it was a spur to greatness for the father of federation. However for Piquenit having a convict father was a source of shame and disappointment it seems. Men like Johnston, Sprent, Walker, Legge and others all Tasmanian Club members were happy enough it seems to have Piquenit join their excursions into the South-West far away from the prying judgements of Hobart Town's tight-knit coteries. But such amiability and fleeting circumstantial fraternity masked a dark secret that they all knew. And that was that Piquenit was descended from convicts. Piquenit's father was a common thief, a felon, but of the worst kind the kind that stole from Her Majesty's Royal Navy. Tasmania may have been on the rim of the British empire.

But the small colony maintained a powerful and lengthy tradition of appointing experienced military men as governors of the colony most notably in this regard Rear Admiral John Franklin for whom there existed a living memory of such offences against Her Majesty's Royal Marine Forces as being punishable by death. Although the Whig Liberal tradition exemplified in the Tasmanian Club upheld the belief that the convict transportation system ought to have had a cleansing effect on the overall character of those transportees present in the Van Diemen's Land colony, special condemnation was reserved for men and their descendants who stole from the

crown. As members of the exclusive Tasmanian Club the men who accompanied Piguénit into the South-West shunned him in public where he was considered more worthy of charity than familiarity, more to be pitied than despised. Piguénit may have been considered unfortunate by birth and therefore worthy of charitable consideration. But none of Piguénit's companions on his sojourns into the South-West would risk his reputation by nominating Piguénit for membership to the Tasmanian Club.

Piguénit's paintings when displayed in the corridors of power in and attached to the colony - the Tasmanian Club, the houses of parliament and the foreign office in London - reflected favourably on the liberalism of that institution and the beliefs and practises of all those associated with it. But that was the limit to which Tasmania's rich and powerful would extend their favour to Piguénit. Had he been a Royal Academician and therefore considered a gentleman painter and a man of naturally unforced and unpretentious ability then no doubt Piguénit's place amongst Hobart Town's social cliques would have been his birthright. Had Piguénit made the decision earlier to leave the security of the public service and taken a risk with his art he may well have found himself immersed in a level of cultural vibrancy on his doorstep in Hobart Town in the 1850s the likes of which may very well never occur again. But then Hobart Town was suffering, as small towns do, from both economic depression and cultural morbidity which when coupled with a deeply conservative outlook and a suspicion toward the large emancipist class would have presented the young man with a quite hopeless and dispiriting environment in which to attempt to thrive. But perhaps that was the point for Piguénit in that he wished to maintain a purity all his own in his art. There is a sense that Piguénit reveled in adversity and that he, perhaps perversely, adored the contrariness that came from his weird, gothic landscape vision.

The question arose as to what extent if any did the experience of social ostracism have of Piguenit's practice as a painter. Perhaps surprisingly Piguenit's treatment of landscape reads like a visual rhetoric of firm self-belief and of a strong personal identification with the landscape, especially the country of the South-West. Piguenit's excursions into the South-West wilderness seemed to purify his art and purge him of the sin of a slavish devotion to the vogue of Impressionism. In some measure there is a suggestion of firm self-belief in what he was doing, a firm belief that collegial isolation from the vogue of Impressionism bore a close resemblance with what must have been a personal revulsion at being socially excluded. More importantly Piguenit must have felt that he did belong in Tasmania despite the social ostracism he must have felt as the son of a convict. Whilst this belonging is not apparent on a social level a sense emanates from Piguenit's paintings of the South-West that this country had made its own lasting indelible impression on him.

Piguenit painted the South-West like a Tasmanian where the landscape demands engagement with it. Piguenit understood that he was not dealing with a landscape which formed the backdrop to the nation-building exercise. Piguenit was dealing with a landscape which naturally refused such easy assimilation into an egocentric narrative of the heroic pioneer melodrama. This was not a place to conquer but rather a place in which survival was and still is at best tenuous. Piguenit knew this because he had seen the tiny settlements of isolated piners, track cutters and miners clinging grimly to the hope of re-victualling from sea without which they could and did on occasion perish. For these people living in the South-West was not a conceptual dilemma of the kind which confronted Melbournians once the Heidelbergers collapsed suburbia and the bush into a compressed narrative of the hard won gains of pioneer settlement. Piguenit's unpeopled landscape therefore spoke to

what are the dominant characteristics of the South-West; that it is remote and harsh yet beautiful.

Piguenit's skill was that he could capture this essence. Inasmuch as the environment of the South-West seemed to be place where "monsters" such as the cannibal convict Pearce might emerge at least according to Marcus Clarke, Piguenit perhaps as the son of a convict had as good a reason as any to despise the South-West. For the colonial administration deliberately chose Macquarie Harbour toward the furthest northerly reaches of the South-West to both contain and doubly-punish the vilest of criminals. Yet Piguenit showed that this portrayal of the South-West was merely another in a series of myths. In this way Piguenit refuses the shackles of intergenerational guilt that so many descendants of convicts felt in Hobart Town in the immediate post transportation era. In celebrating a landscape which to many seemed the perfect distillation of ungodly misery Piguenit through the language of Romanticism portrays the South-West as an unmediated union between nature and the individual. Here society's mores are of no use; all that exists is a reckoning with land.

Throughout this thesis the makings of comparisons and contrasts between Piguenit's Romantically provincial outlook and the great aesthetic movement of the era, Impressionism, which includes the stereotypical sun-blasted nationalistic landscapes of the Heidelbergers has been mostly avoided. There are exceptions to the stereotypical hot and dry landscapes of the Heidelbergers to be found in Streeton's cold and wet inner-cityscapes and Conder's beach scenes. Whilst somewhat loathe to perpetuate a comparison what must be said is that Piguenit was, when compared with the Heidelbergers, equally nationalistic and his intention just as popularist as Roberts, McCubbin, Streeton and Conder. Yet Piguenit's claim to Australian-ness remains

even more firmly anchored than perhaps Roberts and Streeton because they were born in England.

The sense grafted from reading commentary about Piguénit is that too much is made of this environmental determinism; that only an Australian-born artist might capture the Australian landscape correctly. That Piguénit's Tasmanian birth was probably a matter of circumstance and accident rather than design and purpose did not escape the artist's attention where it remained something not necessarily to be proud of. But if a claim can be maintained for Piguénit having possessed unique ability because of the place of his birth then he equally seems to have been unable or unwilling to grasp the realities of settlement in the Australia he grew to maturity in. Piguénit painted as if in temporal and spatial stasis completely divorced from reality painting an empty landscape devoid of human activity despite what must have been the visible and audible signs of industry all around him in Tasmania's South-West as piners, gold prospectors and the like went about their enterprises.

But then the Heidelbergers practiced their own self-delusions at times. Roberts, McCubbin, Streeton and the others may all have depicted hardships all along the frontiers of settlement, even those frontiers found on the outskirts of Melbourne, in one form or another. But so tightly focused were they on depicting heroic human endeavours that they did not show the three great realities of settlement; fire, drought and flood. As we know, Piguénit grasped this aspect of the environment with his *Thunderstorm in the Darling* albeit in a surreal way. Piguénit, like the Heidelbergers, was participating in an environmental narrative. But Piguénit's environmental narrative arrived in a form not born out of an aesthetic impulse but one in which human enterprise might be transformative – as a derivative impulse - of the landscape he depicted. Piguénit's landscapes, rather than depicting the efforts of human

endeavour to harmonise the built and natural environments like the Heidelbergers, functioned as a mnemonic of these endeavours.

Piguenit's landscapes functioned in the world of associations not explicit narratives. His paintings did not so much depict a narrative but formed part of the meta-narrative of progressive development. In this regard it is a strange paradox that Piguenit's illustrations for *Among the Western Highlands* showcased the human struggle to achieve a balance between the natural and the built environment in Tasmania's South-West yet are lauded as exemplars of wilderness appreciation. Yet his landscapes, that is the paintings he produced for commission to be hung in galleries or in private residences are entirely outside of that narrative; they are pure, unadulterated nature. For this audiences in Melbourne shunned Piguenit inasmuch as Melbournians had the Heidelberg School upon whom to hang their regional preoccupations. Melbournians were content with the dichotomy presented by the notion of the bush as a suburban phenomenon while Piguenit painted a timeless, remote, almost hostile wilderness. Piguenit's sublime landscapes arguably extinguished the flame of a nationalistic landscape in Tasmania by contrasting a landscape of cool, sombre darkness with the fluidity and aura of the Heidelberg School.

In conclusion, one of the chief contentions of this thesis has been that William Charles Piguenit practiced a form of conservationism that was quite common in the late nineteenth century in Tasmania. Piguenit was an advocate for sustainable development that exploited natural resources without exhausting them. But there is also the sense that Piguenit seemed to, most probably without intention, to paint his pictures in order to fulfil a historical purpose. Piguenit's repertoire beautifully catalogues and records the wild areas of Tasmania's South-West, archiving evidence

of its existence for posterity and for some, providing a morality tale of sorts, one which describes a litany of abuses and mistakes. It is certainly clear that some of Piguénit's illustrations, in particular those made for the survey reports, fulfill a clear historical purpose. Piguénit's *Crossing the Picton* for instance not only indicates the attire and equipment used by the expeditioners it also records in a slice-of-time perspective an event during which Piguénit paused for a moment to capture what was undoubtedly a treacherous river crossing crating a potential memento mori. Yet *Crossing the Picton* also provides evidence that the men in this party saw nature as their playground, and that they were even there. Piguénit's Lake Pedder sketch reproduced in Johnston's report of 1888 similarly captures the industry of the men in constructing a camp on the Lake's shores. Lake Pedder with its startling quartzite beach and the wall of granite on its westerly flank may have failed to impress Piguénit in the manner it is asserted by environmental groups that it ought to have. But the artist did capture the Lake for posterity if inadvertently. It was in this moment that the Lake and Piguénit both became touchstones for a determined and focused conservation movement one hundred years later. It can be ventured that Piguénit perhaps anticipated the spread of settlement into many of the districts he travelled to make his sketches.

It will always remain a matter of interpretation as to whether it was his motivation to catalogue the wilderness before it was spoiled, or lost. But on the balance of probability Piguénit knew that together with the statistical and scientific evidence of his fellow expeditioners as well as the ongoing viability of communities of piners, ship-builders and miners in the South-West that he may have been looking on and recording a pristine wilderness about to disappear. Piguénit's search for a viable Tasmanian history led him neither to depictions of convicts nor to inclusion of

Aborigines in his scenes but to the pre-historical deep-time past in Tasmania's South-West. In erasing all possible signs of human activity Pighenit managed to escape the social meanings which have been so eagerly pinned to the works of his contemporaries. Modern day conservationism likewise provides an uncomfortable fit. For Pighenit the South-West country must have seemed such a contradiction; wild to the point of being uninhabitable and yet striking in its beauty to such a degree that the desire to represent these characteristics graphically became almost an obsession. But on the other hand there is a sense that for a small colony Van Diemen's Land and then Tasmania must have seemed to embrace all that was ugly about colonisation, distilling the colonial experience down to its most essential even basic elements. For Pighenit sought to escape this milieu even as a memory in moments of reflection while ensconced in his small flat on Sydney's north shore. Tasmania's South-West provided for him a place where he had no superior nor any master, here there was nothing but country, nothing but nature, nothing but silence. Pighenit understood this silence.

APPENDIX A

Past, Current or Future Tasmanian Premiers who were Tasmanian Club Members

Note: The year is that during which the member was admitted to the Club whilst the date range is that during which the member was Premier of Tasmania

*†Thomas Daniel Chapman	1861	2 August 1861 - 20 January 1863
*James Whyte	1861	20 January 1863 - 24 November 1866
Richard Dry	1862	24 November 1866 - 4 August 1869
*James Milne Wilson	1861	4 August 1869 - 4 November 1872
Frederick Innes	1875	4 November 1872 - 4 August 1873
†Alfred Kennerly	1873	4 August 1873 - 20 July 1876
Thomas Reiby	1894	20 July 1876 - 9 August 1877
Philip Fysh (Lib)	1870	9 August 1877 - 5 March 1878
William Robert Giblin	1870	5 March 1878 - 20 December 1878; 30 October 1879 - 15 August 1884
*William Crowther	1861	20 December 1878 - 30 October 1879
Adye Douglas	1873	15 August 1884 - 8 March 1886
James Wilson Agnew	1864	8 March 1886 - 29 March 1887
Philip Oakley Fysh	1870	29 March 1887 - 17 August 1892
Henry Dobson (C)	1866	17 August 1892 - 14 April 1894
Edward Braddon (Lib)	1879	14 April 1894 - 12 October 1899
Neil Elliott Lewis (C/Lib)	1885	12 October 1899 - 9 April 1903; 19 June 1909 – 20 October 1909; 27 October 1909 - 14 June 1912
William Propsting (Lib)	1916	9 April 1903 - 12 July 1904
John Blyth Hayes (N)	1949	12 August 1922 - 14 August 1923
†John Cameron McPhee	1930	15 June 1928 - 15 March 1934
Walter Angus Bethune	1944	26 May 1969 - 3 May 1972

* Foundation Member

† Elected whilst Premier

Tasmanian Premiers who were not admitted

John Evans (C)	12 July 1904 - 9 June 1909
John Earle (Lab)	20 October 1909 - 27 October 1909; 6 April 1914 - 15 April 1916
Albert Solomon (Lib)	14 June 1912 - 6 April 1914
Walter Lee (Lib/N)	15 April 1916 - 12 August 1922; 14 August 1923 - 25 October 1923; 15 March 1934 - 22 June 1934
Joseph Lyons (Lab)	25 October 1923 - 15 June 1928
Albert Ogilvy (Lab)	22 June 1934 - 11 June 1939
Edmund Dwyer Gray (Lab)	11 June 1939 - 18 December 1939
Robert Cosgrove (Lab)	18 December 1939 - 18 December 1947; 25 February 1948 - 26 August 1958
Eric Reece (Lab)	26 August 1958 - 26 May 1969; 3 May 1972 - 31 March 1975
Bill Neilson (Lab)	31 March 1975 - 1 December 1977
Doug Lowe (Lab)	1 December 1977 - 11 November 1981
Harry Holgate (Lab)	11 November 1981 - 26 May 1982
Robin Gray (Lib)	26 May 1982 - 29 June 1989
Michael Field (Lab)	29 June 1989 - 17 February 1992
Ray Groom (Lib)	17 February 1992 - 18 March 1996
Tony Rundle (Lib)	18 March 1996 - 14 September 1998
Jim Bacon (Lab)	14 September 1998 - 21 March 2004
Paul Lennon (Lab)	21 March 2004 - 26 May 2008
David Bartlett (Lab)	26 May 2008 - 24 January 2011
Lara Giddings (Lab)	24 January 2011 – present

C – Conservative

Lab – Labor

Lib – Liberal

N - Nationalist

Appendix B: Chronology of Events

The following is a summary of events focusing on Piguénit's artistic achievements up until his death. Its purpose is to capture the title and date and place of exhibition of as many of Piguénit's works as possible. All of the information provided has been obtained via searches of the nation's newspapers employing the NLA's Trove website, and using the basic search criterion "Piguénit" and limited to a calendar year. The dates shown therefore are, in some cases, not as accurate as may be desired being not always a true reflection of the date range of an exhibition or event but can be considered to reflect the actual publication dates. There are, it must be noted, some discrepancies between this list, and the one compiled by Johannes and Brown which up to this point has provided the most comprehensive account of the major exhibitions at which Piguénit's works have been shown. Several of the events listed herein do not appear in their chronology. In addition there are some major differences between the reports received from the sources Johannes and Brown have consulted and the sources used here although both chronologies rely heavily on newspaper reports. Perhaps then the best suggestion is that Brown and Johannes' chronology be consulted alongside this one if desired. If in the event a picture does not appear in their list then it most probably appears here with relevant details provided. It must also be noted that whilst not claiming that the chronology herein offers anything more than supplementary information to that provided by Johannes and Brown and that all future scholars ought to embark on their own search for evidence, this chronology offers the benefit of, thanks to the technology on offer today, having captured every reference made to Piguénit in almost every newspaper and periodical published in Australia. This chronology therefore catalogues all but a few privately commissioned pictures that were never shown at exhibition and remain in private collections.

- 1866** **October** - Melbourne: Metropolitan Intercolonial Exhibition – listed in the catalogue as 'Messer Piguénit Junior' 30 year old William Charles Piguénit shows *Risdon*, and, *Prince of Wales Bay*, and also a map Piguénit had draughted for the Lands Survey Department of the located portions of Tasmania
- 1867** **December** – Hobart: Piguénit's has a collection of sketches published in book form by Walch Brothers and Birchalls. The six lithographic pictures are collectively entitled *Salmon Ponds, the vicinity of New Norfolk, Tasmania*. There are six *sketches comprising View of the Derwent below New Norfolk; Bennett's Island on the Derwent; The Derwent below the Dry Creek; The Derwent above the Dry Creek; The Plenty near the Bend*, and, *The Salmon Ponds*
- 1868** **February** – Melbourne: Piguénit sends this collection of sketches to Melbourne's *The Argus* but the newspaper decides not to publish them
- 1870** **January** – Melbourne: The Victorian Academy of Arts (VAA) is founded at a meeting held at the Argus Hotel
- October** - Sydney: Metropolitan Intercolonial Exhibition – Piguénit is awarded a bronze medal for his photographs
- 1871** **April** – Sydney: The New South Wales Academy of Art (NSWAA) is established
- August** – Hobart: watercolour sketches of Piguénit's excursion to Port Davey are on display at the Tasmanian Public Library
- 1872** **August** – Hobart: Piguénit shows *Mt. Wellington from New Town Bay* at the Tasmanian Public Library
- 1874** **February 1874** – Sydney: NSWAA trustees purchase *Mount Olympus, Lake St. Clair*
- April** – Sydney: NSWAA Exhibition – Piguénit is awarded the silver medal (amateur) for *Bream Creek, Adventure, Bay, Brune (sic) Island, Tasmania* which was sold for £15 15s to an unknown buyer. His success at this exhibition compels Piguénit to turn professional

- 1875** **March** – Sydney: NSWAA 4th Annual Exhibition – Piguénit's first show as a professional artist. He shows *Mount Olympus, Lake St. Clair, Tasmania – the Source of the Derwent* for which he is awarded an extra silver medal in absence of a work by an amateur artist for which to award the medal. The painting sells for £52 10s from funds raised by public subscription and becomes destined for the proposed Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney making this Piguénit's first sale as a professional, to the people of New South Wales. He also shows *The Craycroft, between Port Davey and Macquarie Harbour, Tasmania*, and, *The Huon River, 22 Miles Above Victoria, Tasmania; Tasman Island; Mount Wellington from the Risdon Road, Tasmania; On the Shannon, Tasmania*; and a sketch of Lake St. Clair with Mount Olympus in the background
- April** – Sydney: New South Wales Agricultural Society Metropolitan Intercolonial Exhibition – Piguénit shows the collection from the NSWAA exhibition including the award-winning *Bream Creek, Adventure, Bay, Brune (sic) Island, Tasmania* which is awarded another 1st prize along with three other paintings being highly commended; *Mt. Wellington from New Town Bay; Mount Olympus, Lake St. Clair, Tasmania*; and, *Tasman Island*
- 1876** **February** – Melbourne: The Art Union of Victoria offers subscribers six photographic reproductions of works by various artists including Piguénit's *On the South Esk, Tasmania*. Reproductions are also available for purchase for sixpence each
- April** – Sydney: NSWAA Exhibition – Piguénit is awarded a Certificate of Merit for *Looking Down the Valley of the Grose*. For the second year running there is no amateur award given
- July** - Hobart: *Mount Ida and Lake St. Clair* goes on show in the library of the Royal Society, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG) established in 1843. The picture is later purchased by future Tasmanian Premier James Agnew
- September** – Hobart: MLC James Reid Scott earlier commissions *Mount Byron from Lake Petrarch* which goes on display this month at the TMAG
- December** – Hobart: Piguénit completes Scott's map of the Western Districts of Tasmania which goes on sale for the price of one shilling. Most buyers are gold prospectors and oil miners as the map provides geological detail not previously available
- 1877** **January** – Hobart: following the interest shown by the public last September TMAG hosts another Piguénit show
- March** – Melbourne: Victorian Academy of Arts Exhibition – shows *Quamby's Bluff, Tasmania; Morning on the Upper Huon*, and, *The Thumbs, Near Wellington Falls*
- April** – Sydney: Metropolitan Intercolonial Exhibition of New South Wales – J. Henniker Heaton displays a painting commissioned from Piguénit entitled *The West Flank of the Valley of the Grose*
- May** – Hobart: Piguénit completes what for him is a rare kind of picture, a botanical sketch of a flower and seed of a *Banksia Serrata* (saw-tooth banksia) presented to the Royal Society of Tasmania
- May** – Hobart: *Quamby's Bluff* appears as an illustration in the May edition of the *Illustrated Australian News*
- June** – Hobart: Piguénit finishes two commission; *Meander River, Cumming's Peak* (head) for A. J. Hall, and, *Alum Cliffs*, (on the) *River Mersey* (near Chudleigh) for another patron, showing them Royal Society of Tasmania Museum, the forerunner to the Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery

September – Launceston: Pigenit completes a commission for a painting entitled *Deep Creek on the Mersey*, a monochrome painted for Hudson and Hopwood's private gallery in the city and which is purchased by Robert McKenzie Johnston

December – Auckland: New Zealand Society of Artists Exhibition - shows *Morning in the Valley of the Upper Huon* which receives 1st prize and earns the artist the silver medal. This is Pigenit's first international success as a professional artist

1878

March – Devonport: *Meander River, Cumming's Head* offered as first prize in a private art union organised by McPhail and Weymouth, a Devonport company which also specialises in the sale of musical instruments

August – Hobart: TMAG Exhibition – Pigenit shows four "new" paintings, the first of which is a copy executed in monochromatic oils of *Mount Olympus (from Lake St. Clair, Tasmania – the Source of the Derwent)* the original of which is owned by people of New South Wales. Also on show is *Mount Rufus* commissioned for G. T. Collins; *St Paul's Dome, from the South Esk, near Avoca* commissioned for Mr. H. Smith and which the owner would later bequeath to the Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in Launceston; and lastly, Pigenit's monochrome study *Eldon Bluff (from Lake Augusta)* which Scott had conquered on their last expedition together in 1873

1879

January – Hobart: Pigenit completes a commission for the manager of the Launceston and Western Railway, R. W. Lord entitled *River Meander, near Cheshunt*. Lord would loan the picture to an exhibition also featuring works by his Pigenit's sister Agnes, and famed colonial artists John Glover and Louis Buvelot, at the Oddfellows Hall, Launceston in February

February – Launceston: Oddfellows Hall Exhibition – this is the largest show for Pigenit since early 1875. He shows several commissions loaned in response to a public notice, including, *Sunset, South Shore, Lake St. Clair*, and, *Eldon Bluff, Lake Augusta* from G. T. Collins private collection; Lord's *Evening on the Meander*, and, *Sunrise on the Huon*; H. Smith's *St. Paul's Dome, from the South Esk, near Avoca*; two commissions for A. J. Hall entitled *Cumming's Head, from the Meander*, and, *On the Huon*; also shown is Pigenit's copy of *Mount Olympus, Lake St. Clair*; Mrs McKennie's *On the South Esk, Avoca* and Robert McKenzie Johnston's *Deep Creek on the Mersey*

May – Sydney: Pigenit writes to the southern members based in Hobart of the Royal Commission on the upcoming Sydney International Exhibition requesting that the NSWAA's *Mount Olympus, Lake St. Clair, Tasmania* and *Grose Valley, Blue Mountains* both be exhibited

July – Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales Exhibition – at the Tasmanian Court Pigenit shows a painting commissioned by future Premier of Tasmania Adye Douglas entitled *Ben Lomond from the Valley of the South Esk, Avoca*

August – Hobart: Douglas earlier commissioned another painting by Pigenit entitled *Ben Lomond, from the Vale of Avoca* which along with *The Huon River, at Victoria, Tasmania* hangs in the bar of Parliament House, Hobart where both pictures remain until inspected by the governor Sir Frederick Weld after which both are shown at the Sydney International Exhibition

August – Sydney: Secretary of the NSWAA Eccleston Du Faur announces that Pigenit's *Mount Olympus, Lake St. Clair* will be shown on the condition that it is insured for £60

October – Sydney: International Exhibition – Pigenit's entries almost miss the closing date for submissions to the International Exhibition whilst the collection remained in Hobart awaiting a viewing by the governor. Shown are Adye Douglas' *Ben Lomond from the Valley of the South Esk, Avoca*; *The South East Peak of Ben Lomond, Tasmania*; George Collins' *In the Grose Valley, Blue Mountains, NSW*; *The Valley of the Derwent, Tasmania*; *Huon River, Picnic Hotel*; and a view from the top

of Queen's Domain looking toward the suburb of New Town. Pigenit receives a 1st prize for *Grose Valley* and an extra 1st prize for Douglas' *Ben Lomond* as does *Huon River*. The exhibition however becomes notorious for some bizarre mistakes in Pigenit's case in that his picture entitled *The Huon at Victoria – showery weather* is wrongly ticketed as *Mount Wellington from Sandy Bay* with Pigenit's former mentor Frank Dunnnett credited with its execution, whilst Douglas, the owner of *Grose Valley*, is credited with the execution of that picture. Tasmania's governor Sir Frederick Aloysius Weld nevertheless inspects the exhibition and upon his return to Hobart deems it appropriate to award the southern committee secretary Mr Hull with a silver medal for his services to the commission and its exhibition

1880

March - Consistent success in the Sydney exhibitions compels Pigenit to leave Tasmania aboard *Tasman* leaving Hobart Town on the 9th of the month to live in New South Wales with his family. He immediately helps co-found, along with the Collingridge brothers, the Art Society of New South Wales (ASNSW)

October – Melbourne: Pigenit shows at the Melbourne Exhibition with his paintings catalogued under the New South Wales Fine Art Court for the first time

November – Sydney: The NSWAA hands over its collection to the newly-formed Council of the Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW) including Pigenit's *Mount Olympus*, *Lake St. Clair*. The NSWAA having been in existence for just nine years is officially dissolved

December – Sydney: ASNSW Exhibition – the society's 1st annual exhibition is open only to its members. Pigenit shows a several new pictures; a commission for Joseph Archer Panshanger; Douglas' *Ben Lomond*, *Evandale, from the Western Line, Tasmania*; two versions of *On the Nepean*; *On the Hobart Town Rivulet*; *Trinity Falls*, *Govett's Leap Valley*; *Sydney Harbour, from the North Shore*. With access to a wider audience than those experienced in Tasmania, Pigenit's sister Harriet continues to exhibit her botanical studies in watercolour at every opportunity. Both announce their respective entries for the upcoming Melbourne International Exhibition

1881

January – Sydney: ASNSW forced to commercialise the sale of its member's works taking out advertisements in the daily press. Unsure of the demand the society decides on a public auction

March – Launceston: having failed to achieve reserve at the auction Pigenit displays *On the Nepean* and *Sydney Harbour from the North Shore* at Hudson and Hopwood's publishing business in Launceston. G. T. Collins immediately purchases *On the Nepean* to add to his collection of Pigenit works

April – Auckland, New Zealand – *St. Paul's Dome, from the South Esk* is loaned from its owner and shown at the Auckland Society of Arts Exhibition

May – Sydney: ASNSW awards a prize to Pigenit for the best monochrome, *Life in the Forrest, Tasmania, the Midday Rest*, another Tasmanian scene. The council of the society will offer photographic reproductions of the painting to its art union subscribers with tickets being priced at 21 shillings

June – Hobart: Exhibition and Fancy Fair – Pigenit shows a river scene, probably Collins' *On the Nepean* whilst Harriet Pigenit also shows her botanical studies

August – Sydney: 1st Annual Meeting of the ASNSW

September – Hobart: on display at Fleming's private gallery is a Pigenit monochrome entitled *The Western Ranges*. The painting is recommended as a visual reference for oil miners and mineral prospectors alike

October – Sydney: ASNSW Exhibition – Pigenit shows a crowd favourite *St. Paul's Dome, from the South Esk, Tasmania*, and some newer works, *Hacking River*,

from the Fountain; On the Hacking River, NSW; In the Huon Forest, Tasmania; On the Upper Derwent, Tasmania; Valley of the Grose; On the Nepean, Sunrise; Cook's River, Botany Bay; and, Mount Wellington, from Risdon Road, Tasmania

November - AGNSW Exhibition - *Mount Ida, Lake St. Clair, Tasmania* (not the painting owned by Agnew) receives a 2nd prize in its category and £25. This is Piguénit's first art prize in over two years

November – Sydney: Exhibition at the private gallery of John Sands where Piguénit shows *Mount Ida, Lake St. Clair, Tasmania* for which Piguénit receives 2nd prize and £5

December – Sydney: AGNSW trustees purchase *Mount Ida, Lake St. Clair, Tasmania* which goes on display with *Mount Olympus, Lake St. Clair, Tasmania* which had been purchased by public subscription in 1874

1882

April - Melbourne: Victorian Academy of Arts Exhibition – Piguénit, now being described as a Sydney artist, shows just one painting entitled *Mount Wellington, from New Town Bay, Tasmania*

April – Sydney: Piguénit enters a competition offered by the publishers of the *Illustrated Sydney News* asking for illustrations. Piguénit offers *The Teamster's Halt*, for Piguénit a rare and reluctant example of a human interest subject, for which he receives 5th prize out of nine finalists and for which Piguénit receives £5 from the newspaper's proprietors

April – Sydney: The ASNSW exhibits a series of black & white illustrations intended for photographic reproduction. Piguénit enters a monochromatic version of *In the Grose Valley, Blue Mountains*. After much deliberation the council of the ASNSW, by special vote, creates a new 2nd prize of 5 guineas which Piguénit duly receives

September – Sydney: ASNSW offers subscribers to its next art union, for the price of 1 guinea per ticket, a photographic reproduction of Piguénit's *In the Grose Valley, Blue Mountains*

September – Sydney: The Garden Palace, which had been the venue for the ASNSW first two exhibitions is totally destroyed by fire. A version of Piguénit's *In the Grose Valley, Blue Mountains* which was to have been photographed and offered to the society's art union subscribers is among the many works lost collectively valued at over £6000. Fortunately the painting had previously been lithographed with the offering of reproductions merely being postponed to March

1883

January – the AGNSW, remaining situated on Sydney's Domain, changes its name becoming the National Art Gallery of New South Wales (NAGNSW), a name the institution would hold until 1958

January – Sydney: Piguénit sits on the panel of judges for the ASNSW Black & White competition seeking illustrations suited for photographic reproduction and offered to subscribers to the forthcoming October art union

February – Hobart: Piguénit shows *Mount Wellington, from the Risdon Road* at the Tasmanian Juvenile and Industrial Exhibition

March – Sydney: Piguénit is made honorary treasurer of the ASNSW

April – Sydney: the ASNSW Exhibition is Piguénit's biggest show of new work in over four years, all of it a result of studies made in New South Wales and in the immediate environs of the Piguénit family residence at Hunter's Hill, Ryde on Sydney's north shore. New works include *From Towong*, *Looking North Along the Valley of the Murray*, and, *The National Park, Port Hacking*, and, *At the Head of the Tarban Creek*, and, *A Backwater on the Murray*, and, *On the Nepean*, and, *Botany*

Bay, from the Mouth of Cook's River, and, A Bit on the Upper Murray, and, Lover's Walk, Cook's River, and, Untitled (a gum tree), and some sketches, a monochrome entitled Mount Kosciusko and the Valley of the Upper Murray. Following the exhibition the ASNSW council agrees to purchase the monochromatic Mount Kosciusko and the Valley of the Upper Murray for 25 guineas and in May decides to make the painting available through subscription to an art union raffle. Council offers to all subscribers to the art union a photographic reproduction of the painting

October – Sydney: ASNSW Exhibition – art union subscribers each receive a photographic reproduction of *Mount Kosciusko and the Valley of the Upper Murray*. 407 tickets are sold raising over £800

November – Sydney: Exhibition at a private gallery of Mr John Sands were Pigenit shows *Darling Harbour, from Lane Cove, Sydney*

December - India: Calcutta International Exhibition – Pigenit shows *Sydney in 1882, from North Shore, (showing Garden Palace, destroyed by Fire, 22 September 1882)* and wins the Gold Medal for a monochromatic oil painting *Mount Kosciusko, Valley of the Upper Murray*

1884

January – Sydney: John Sands' gallery exhibition - Pigenit offers his picture an oil in colour *Mount Kosciusko, Valley of the Upper Murray* for sale at the gallery at a discounted price along with *The National Park, Port Hacking*, and a new picture from an old subject called *A Sassafras Forrest, Tasmania; The Lovers' Walk; A View from Onion's Point*. If unsold the pictures along with others by other artist would be offered as prizes in a raffle

January – Sydney: NAGNSW Exhibition – held in what could only be described as 'an overheated wooden shed with a tin roof' constructed in 1879 to house the Fine Arts display of the Sydney International Exhibition of 1879-1880, Pigenit displays two or perhaps three paintings in an exhibition which is remarkable for the paucity of its fine arts display as artists become more attracted to making illustrations for the rapidly expanding illustrated periodicals market

May – Sydney: Pigenit submits *Morning on the Coast of N.S.Wales* to a competition run by the proprietors of the *Australian Town & Country Journal* for pictures suitable for reproduction as illustrations in the periodical. With a 1st prize of 100 guineas, Pigenit's entry is unsuccessful

July – Sydney: ASNSW Exhibition – shows *On the Coast, New South Wales; Evening in the Valley of the Upper Murray*; also shows *View from Onion's Point* which failed to sell at the John Sands gallery; and two Tasmanian subjects, *Near Ross, Tasmania*, and, *A Mountain Stream, Tasmania* which appears on the front page of the *Illustrated Sydney News* next month

October – the Tasmanian Art Association is formed by the governor and members of the Tasmanian parliament

December – Hobart: shows a sketch of the River Derwent from Cornelian Bay at R. L. Hood's picture framers in Liverpool Street under the aegis of the newly-formed Tasmanian Art Association

1885

January – Sydney: Pigenit is questioned by police after he discovers a woman's body in an advanced state of decomposition in scrub at the Field of Mars reserve only metres from the Pigenit family home. A post-mortem examination showed that the woman had been murdered. The woman remains unidentified, no charges were ever laid and the case remains unsolved

April - Sydney: ASNSW Exhibition – shows *Sydney in 1882, from North Shore, showing Garden Palace, destroyed by Fire, 22 September 1882; From Towong, Looking along the Valley of the Murray, and, An Australian Mangrove*. The painting *From (Towong) Valley of the Upper Murray* is purchased by the New South Wales

government for its Executive Council Chambers. A reproduction of this painting later appears in *Australian Town and Country Journal* on 5 April 1890 illustrating an article calling for the provision of a railway into the region. *An Australian Mangrove* wins a special prize awarded by the trustees, of £25 provided by patron of the arts James Fairfax provided that the painting be hung in the NAGNSW

September – Sydney: Pigenit exhibits at the opening of the Young Men’s Christian Association building in George Street, Sydney

December – Launceston: School of Art Exhibition - A.J. Hall’s *Cumming’s Head, from the Meander* painted by Pigenit in 1879 and two of Collins’ monochromes, a scene taken from Huon Road, and, *Lake Augusta, on the West Coast* are shown

December – Hobart: Robert Mackenzie Johnston receives five paintings from Pigenit the subjects of which are *Lake Pedder*; *The Arthur Ranges from the Craycroft*; *Cumming’s Head from Stocker’s Plains*; *Crossing the Picton*; and, *Ben Lomond from the Marshes*. Johnston later takes the paintings to Collingridge engravers to have photographic reproductions made for Johnston’s *Geology of Tasmania*

December – Sydney: The sketch *Lover’s Walk, Cook’s River Road* appears in the *Illustrated Sydney News*

December – Hobart: Tasmanian Art Association Exhibition – for its 2nd annual exhibition the association occupies rooms at Hobart’s Town Hall where Johnston displays the monochromes painted for him by Pigenit

1886

January – Sydney: Pigenit’s sketch *The Head of Tarban Creek* appears in the *Illustrated Sydney News*

January – Sydney: ASNSW “Black & White” Exhibition – in light of the ever-increasing popularity of illustrated periodicals, the society holds an exclusive exhibition. Pigenit shows his *Country South of Mt. Bischoff*

January – Sydney: it is announced that a Picturesque Atlas of Australasia has been commissioned and will appear as 36 monthly instalments between 1886-1888. Pigenit is announced as one of the contributors

April – Sydney: ASNSW Exhibition – Pigenit shows just one work entitled *Lane Cove, near Fig Tree*

May – Sydney: Pigenit unanimously elected vice-president of the ASNSW with Julian Ashton elected as president

July - London: Indo-Colonial Exhibition (also known as the Colonial and Indian Exhibition) – Pigenit shows a painting completed in 1880, *Sydney Harbour, from the North Shore*, also, *A Billabong on the Murray River*, and the newly-completed *Sydney in 1882*

September – “Saintogne”, Hunter’s Hill, NSW: his father, Frederick Le Geyt Pigenit dies aged 86

September – Sydney: ASNSW Exhibition – shown is *A Mountain Top, Tasmania*

December – Hobart: a body comprising the governor, the Premier of Tasmania and other honourable members of parliament is formed to organise a Fine Arts Exhibition to be held in the Legislative Council Assembly chambers, Hobart in February next

1887

January – Hobart: anxious that his largest show be a success, Pigenit makes the journey from Sydney to Hobart to oversee preparations and to meet with some of his earliest benefactors

February – Hobart: Fine Art Exhibition/Exhibition of the Fine Arts – Piguénit's biggest show since April 1883 takes place in the town of his birth. There is little new work, the exhibition being more of a testimonial occasion. Here he shows a painting commissioned for Robert Mackenzie Johnston who would later that month accompany Piguénit and others to the West Coast, also shown is *The Gorges at Chudleigh*. C.M. Maxwell loans *Mount Dromedary* and *On the Huon* to the exhibition, as does Rev. J. V. Buckland who loans *Mount Direction*, J. Archer loans *Panshanger*, and James Agnew loans *A River Scene at Sunrise* and *Mount Ida and Lake St. Clair*, while Piguénit loans the unsold sketches *In the Grose Valley*, *New South Wales* and *Hobart from Kangaroo Bay* and *From the Bay at Bellerive*. The committee for the exhibition had commissioned two paintings, *Mangrove Creek*, *Lane Cove* and *Lake St. Clair, the Source of the River Derwent* which were also shown

February – West Coast of Tasmania: whilst the Fine Arts exhibition takes place, Piguénit escapes to the island's west coast as the official illustrator with Surveyor Sprent's west coast party

July – Sydney: ASNSW Exhibition – vice-president Piguénit shows two monochrome oils worked up from sketches made on the Charles Percy Sprent's expedition, chronicled in *Walk to the West*

August – Sydney: Callan and Sons art dealers exhibition at their private gallery 318 George Street – here Piguénit shows a series of monochromes, *Peak of King William, from the Terraces*; *King William Range*; *Mount Gell, from the Western Flank of Mount Arrowsmith*; *Mount King William, from Lake George*, and, *The Frenchman's Cap*. Much of this work is the product of Piguénit's contribution to the Picturesque Atlas of Australasia

September – Hobart: at R.L. Hood's gallery, Piguénit shows the same five of eight or nine monochrome oils from the expedition which along with a sketch of Lake Pedder and a monochromatic of Hell's Gates, Port Davey will illustrate Piguénit's lecture *Among the Western Highlands*

September – Hobart: *The Mercury* publishes an article written by Piguénit about the west coast expedition which encourages speculators and prospectors to seek opportunities in the region

December – Adelaide: Jubilee Exhibition – shows a painting from January 1884, *A Sassafras Forest, Tasmania*, and also, *Faith, Hope and Charity Islands, in Port Esperance, Tasmania* which is awarded 1st prize, Piguénit's first domestic award in almost six years

December – Sydney: ASNSW Exhibition – Piguénit, preoccupied with his contributions to the Picturesque Atlas, offers few new works, among them, *An Autumn Evening* and some sketches of the scenery around the family home at Lane Cove

1888

January – Sydney: Piguénit shows *Lake St. Clair* and three sketches of Lane Cove at the ASNSW exhibition

March – Sydney: a new artistic journal *Australian Art: a Monthly Magazine* is launched. Piguénit provides the illustrations for the first edition whilst fellow ASNSW member George Gollingridge, Piguénit's engraver, provides the editorial comment which in particular calls on the federal government to fund art schools such as the ASNSW. The journal also offers a biographical sketch of Piguénit

April – Hobart: Piguénit presents *Lake St. Clair* to the Tasmanian people. The picture will be shown at the Melbourne Centennial International Exhibition after which it is destined to hang in the Agent-General of Tasmania's rooms in London. Piguénit later writes to his cousin Francis remarking on the benefit to his career that will be gained from having his painting on display in London

May – Hobart: eager to have Piguénit represent Tasmania instead of New South Wales at the upcoming Melbourne Centennial International Exhibition, chairman of the Tasmanian Art Association former premier of Tasmania James Agnew writes to Piguénit requesting *Lake St. Clair* be shown

June – Hobart: Piguénit presents another picture *Mount Ida, Lake St. Clair, Tasmania* to parliamentary opposition leader and Minister for Lands and Works Edward Braddon. The painting is destined to hang in the Agent-General's Office, London. In return Piguénit is offered a large commission by the government to paint a series of monochromatic Tasmanian landscapes. Piguénit presents six of nine or ten oils commissioned for the Melbourne Centennial International Exhibition to the Tasmanian government but asks for payment-in-advance for the final three pictures

July – Hobart: the edition of the Picturesque Atlas of Australasia that Tasmanians had been waiting for is published. Part 28 focuses exclusively on Tasmania featuring five full page sketches by Piguénit, *Mount King William*; *The Frenchman's Cap*; *Eldon Bluff*; *St. Paul's Dome*, and, *The Butts of Ben Lomond*. Piguénit's landscapes provide Australian readers with their primary means of recognition with Tasmanian landscapes; the South-West wilderness.

August – Melbourne: Centennial International Exhibition – timed to coincide with the publication of Part 28 of the Picturesque Atlas of Australasia, the Tasmanian government exhibits six of a promised nine or ten monochromatic oils. Long-time Piguénit benefactors also loan their works to the Tasmanian Court at the exhibition; Agnew's *Mount Ida and Lake St. Clair* from 1876; Hall's *Cumming's Head*, and *Huon River* from 1879; Johnston's collection of monochromes, a picture entitled *Western Island*, and a few watercolours. The NAGNSW loans *Mount Ida, Lake St. Clair, Tasmania*, and, *Mount Olympus*. Melbourne's *Argus* falsely reports William's deceased father, Frederick Le Geyt as an exhibitor at the exhibition

September – Sydney: ASNSW – Piguénit shows *Winter's Evening*

October – London: *The Illustrated London News* reviews the Picturesque Atlas of Australasia and makes a 'cordial commendation' of Piguénit's sketches

November – Hobart: Johnston's *A Systematic Account of the Geology of Tasmania*, illustrated by Piguénit, is published and meets with mixed reviews

1889

January – Sydney: in the aftermath of the Melbourne Centennial International Exhibition the NAGNSW comes under fire as a dispute emerges as to what ought to constitute colonial art. The virtues of native-born artists such as Piguénit, over whom a similar war is waged between Tasmania and New South Wales each contending for right to claim him as its own, are played out against European-born artists whose works are also hung in the NAGNSW

January – Melbourne: winners at the Centennial International Exhibition are announced with Piguénit achieving a 2nd order of merit award in the New South Wales court for both *Villa, Maria Bay, New South Wales*, and, *Autumn Evening*. His ten monochromatic oils, shown in the Tasmanian Court, are again attributed to William's father by *The Argus*. They receive no award from the judges

February – Melbourne: the Centennial Exhibition committee produces the first *Centennial Magazine* which features Piguénit's *Autumn Evening* in its frontispiece

March – Hobart: TMAG, Tasmanian Art Association Exhibition – having held its members-only exhibition there the Association conducts a free exhibition, opening in April, of which Piguénit's works form the nucleus in a newly-opened room of the TMAG which would later become the Colonial Gallery. Shown are the oils that were displayed at the New South Wales Court in Melbourne. James Agnew loans his *A River Scene at Sunrise*, and, *Mount Ida and Lake St. Clair* whilst Johnston loans *The Frenchman's Cap*. Attorney-General Andrew Inglis Clark loans a Piguénit painting, possibly a coloured oil of the monochromatic painting made for Johnston in

1885, *The Peak of Ben Lomond, from the Ben Lomond Marshes, Tasmania*. Piquenit's prize-winning *Faith, Hope and Charity Islands, from Port Esperance* is hung as is *Scene on the Derwent*. Lamenting the lack of public investment in art by the Tasmanian government evidenced by the need for loans from privateers for the exhibition, President of the ASNSW, of which Piquenit is vice-president, Julian Ashton pleads with the government of the day asking that Piquenit be commissioned to paint such a picture for commission

April – Hobart: although remaining a resident of New South Wales, Piquenit subscribes to the Tasmanian Arts Association

June – Melbourne: the June Edition of the *Centennial Magazine* again features Piquenit in its frontispiece with a reproduction of his *Mount Olympus*

September – Sydney: ASNSW Exhibition - shows *Lane Cove River, from the Cliff near the Bridge*; a picture entitled *Among the Western Highlands; The Huon, Tasmania; Parramatta River, from Hunter's Hill*, and, *Upper Nepean River, New South Wales* which is subsequently purchased by the trustees of the NAGNSW

October – Hobart: the governor of Tasmania recommends the appropriation out of consolidated revenue the sum of £42, for the purchase of Piquenit picture for the people of Tasmania. A resolution is made and passed immediately

1890

February – Sydney: the *Illustrated Sydney News* publishes a feature article on Piquenit in connection with his paintings in the NAGNSW

February – Hobart: the Tasmanian government purchases *Faith, Hope and Charity Islands, from Port Esperance*, at present hanging in the TMAG, using the £42 appropriated from treasury. Plans are immediately put in place to photographically reproduce the painting and to send copies to the Agent-General of Tasmania in London Edward Braddon for him display in his rooms

March – Hobart: James Reid Scott's 1876 commission *Mount Byron from Lake Petrarch* is loaned to the TMAG prompting further calls for a commission to be offered to Piquenit

April - Dunedin: New Zealand International Exhibition, Dunedin - *Autumn Evening* receives a 1st award

April – Sydney: the *Australian Town and Country Journal* publishes an article calling for the government to provide a railway from Albury to Walaregang in the Murray Valley. Piquenit's *The Upper Murray Valley – with a View of Mount Kosciusko* is reproduced to illustrate the article

April – Sydney: at Callan and Sons, the ASNSW holds an exhibition at which Piquenit shows three new works *entrance to the Upper Nepean; Looking Northward from Shark Island, Port Jackson*, and a view from Lane Cove River

May – Piquenit finishes a copy of the award-winning *Faith, Hope and Charity Islands, from Port Esperance*. The picture is destined for Braddon's rooms in London where it will hang along with eight other Piquenit paintings

June – Hobart: the Governor of Tasmania Sir Robert Hamilton and Lady Hamilton host a visit to the colony and the TMAG by the Governor of New South Wales Lord Carrington and other dignitaries where Piquenit's pictures are greatly admired

August – Sydney: Piquenit shows just three works at the ASNSW Exhibition but which are of entirely new and unprecedented subjects; *Flood at Mount Oxley; Out West, during the Flood of 1890*, and, *The Gundabooka Range*. The great floods that blighted the Darling Downs region straddling the Queensland and New South Wales border would inspire Piquenit to undertake a dramatic turn in his depictions of Australian landscapes

September – Sydney: *Out West, During the Flood of 1890 (the Gundabooka Range, N.S.W)* wins for Piquenit what may be considered the inaugural Wynne Prize for landscape painting awarded by the trustees of the NAGNSW. The prize of 20 guineas, awarded annually to an artist resident in New South Wales, was the result of a bequest established by Richard Wynne at a dinner hosted by the trustees of the NAGNSW late in 1889

1891

March – Sydney: a London publication *The Year's Art* features Piquenit's *The Upper Nepean* and pictures of other artists hung in the NAGNSW

March – Hobart: at the Tasmanian Art Association Exhibition held at the TMAG, Piquenit shows four new pictures, and one painted in 1876 for James Reid Scott which is loaned to the permanent display in the Colonial Gallery entitled *Mount Byron from Lake Petrarch*

April – Sydney: Callan and Sons, ASNSW Exhibition – Piquenit shows four paintings entitled, *View of the Derwent, Tasmania; Spring Morning, Lane Cove; Long Bay, Middle Harbour*, and, *Evening View on the Lane Cove River*. The exhibition is notable for the small physical size of the landscapes shown, a clear indication that patronage of the arts has come under increasing financial pressure

April – Launceston: Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Inaugural Exhibition – a private owner Mr. G. T. Collins shows fifty paintings, many by Piquenit including *The Grose Valley, Blue Mountains, N.S.W.; Adamson's Peak; Lake St. Clair*, and two monochromes owned by Collins, one of which entitled *Life in the Forest, Tasmania: a Midday Rest* which was awarded a 1st prize by the ASNSW in 1881, the other entitled *View of Hobart and Mount Wellington, from the Jetty at Bellerive*. Adye Douglas also loans *A Mountain Stream*, and, *Ben Lomond, from the South Esk* for the exhibition

July - Sydney: made vice-president of the ASNSW

September – Sydney: ASNSW Exhibition – three new works, *In the Sweet Stillness of an Autumn Day; Evening, Lane Cove*, and, *Lane Cove River*

November – Sydney: an Australian Academy of Arts is formed

November – Launceston: The recently-opened Victoria Museum and Art Gallery makes a rare exhibition of Piquenit's work, a single painting, Adye Douglas' *Ben Lomond from the Valley of the South Esk, Avoca*

November – Launceston: at the Tasmanian International Exhibition, Piquenit receives a 1st prize for A. J. Hall's *Victoria River, Huon – Morning*, a silver medal for *Evening on the Upper Yarra*, and a special 1st for his Wynne Prize winning *Out West, During the Flood, 1890*. He also shows a painting from 1885, Hall's *Cumming's Peak, Western Bluff, River Meander, Tasmania*, and, *Mount Byron, on the West Coast*

1892

January – Hobart: Piquenit delivers his lecture *Among the Western Highlands of Tasmania* at the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science meeting, where he shows the series of monochrome oils of the South – West Tasmanian wilderness. Piquenit also reads a paper prepared by ASNSW president Julian Ashton entitled *Popular Errors About Art and Artists*. In the audience for both papers were His Excellency and Lady Hamilton

February – Launceston: Victoria Museum and Art Gallery Exhibition – shows *Cumming's Peak, Western Bluff, River Meander, Tasmania*, and three watercolours

March – Hobart: at the recommendation of the governor the Tasmanian Government purchases Piquenit's eight monochromes that he showed in January at the AAAS meeting in Hobart. They are presented to the TMAG

March – Hobart: Piguenit shows his award-winning *Out West, During the Flood of 1890 (the Gundabooka Range, N.S.W)* at the Tasmanian Exhibition where it receives a special 1st award

April – Sydney: Piguenit becomes President of the ASNSW

June – Hunter's Hill: Piguenit's mother Mary Ann passes away aged 84

September – Hobart: an unnamed artist becomes the first art student to copy Piguenit's eight monochromes on display in the Colonial Gallery at the TMAG. The Art Society of Tasmania, formerly the Tasmanian Art Association, sponsors the display of students' works at both the Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in Launceston, and the TMAG

September – Sydney: ASNSW Exhibition – Piguenit shows four new paintings; *A Western Pastoral; On the Ryde Road – Sunset, After Rain; Sunset, Looking up Lane Cove from the Avenue*, and, *Spring, Lane Cove, from "Italia"*. This show marks Piguenit's most strident departure from the mountainous landscapes of Tasmania to the coastal and river views of his new home on Sydney's north shore

November – Hobart: the Government Literary Club, later the Hamilton Literary Society, presents its president Lady Hamilton with a picture painted by Piguenit, *The Derwent, at Glenorchy, Tasmania*

1893

March – Hobart: the popularity of Piguenit's monochromes on display in the TMAG prompts the government to publish Piguenit's *Among the Western Highlands* lecture in full including its eight illustrations

March – Hobart: Tasmanian Art Society Competition - Piguenit returns to Hobart to act as a judge for the competition, sponsored by long-time patron-of-the-arts and former Premier of Tasmania James Agnew

April – Hobart: whilst in Hobart Piguenit is commissioned to paint a picture a view of Shag Bay which the patron, Mrs Scott, presents to the TMAG

April – Sydney: the *Australian Town and Country Journal* publishes an abridged version of *Among the Western Highlands* including illustrations

June – Chicago: World's Fair, Australian Exhibit – trustees of the ASNSW show Piguenit's *Upper Nepean River* (purchased in 1889) in Chicago

June – Paris: Salon – Piguenit shows *Navarre Plains, Tasmania*

September – Sydney: ASNSW Exhibition – Piguenit shows just one painting, *Break-O'-Day Plains, Tasmania: After the Storm*

November – Hobart: Piguenit again acts as judge at the Tasmanian Art Society competition

1894

February - Hobart: the Art Society of Tasmania Intercolonial Exhibition – the society hosts its 10th annual exhibition which is open to entries from all the colonies. Piguenit shows a few older pictures, amongst 40 or so pictures sent by the ASNSW, reserving his newer works for the upcoming Tasmanian International Exhibition later in the year

May – Hobart: Piguenit sends *Sunset, Looking up Lane Cove from the Avenue*, and, *Spring, Lane Cove, from "Italia"* to the TMAG for display

June – Hobart: Adye Douglas loans *Ben Lomond from the Valley of the South Esk*, *Avoca*, and, *A Mountain Stream* to the TMAG

July – Sydney: Piguénit's presidency of the ASNSW lasts just 14 months after he steps down due to an internal dispute over voting rights within the society

August – Hobart: Andrew Inglis Clark returns from discussions with the Federal Council in regard to the Federation movement. Clark also visits with Piguénit requesting that the latter paint a picture for the forthcoming Tasmanian International Exhibition

September – Hobart: two more monochromes from Piguénit are hung in the Colonial Gallery, TMAG, *View from Beltana*, *Looking Down the Derwent*, and, *View of Geilston Bay, Looking up the Derwent*

September – Sydney: ASNSW Exhibition – Piguénit shows two new works, *Over the Hills and Far Away*, and, *In the Gloaming*

October – Sydney: Piguénit judges paintings at the Industrial Exhibition, Balmain

November – Hobart: Tasmanian International Exhibition – Piguénit sends four paintings to the exhibition to be hung in the Tasmanian Court; *Over the Hills and Far Away*, and, *In the Gloaming*, and also, *Mount Dromedary*, *River Derwent*, and *The Silvery Tide, Lane Cove*

1895

January – Hobart: the Exhibition ends with over 162,000 visitors having attended

February – Hobart: Piguénit shows five oils at the Exhibition, three of which had been sold to Mr. Justice Page of Glenorchy; *In the Gloaming*, and also, *Mount Dromedary*, *River Derwent*, and *The Silvery Tide, Lane Cove*. Certificates of degree are awarded in Black & White oils: *View from Beltana* receiving a 1st and *View from Geilston Bay*, a 2nd, in the Landscape in oils category: receives 1st for *Sunset Glow*; 2nd for *Silvery Tide, Lane Cove*

February – Hobart: forever keen to avoid crowds, Piguénit arrives from Sydney to see the Exhibition being packed away

February – Manchester: Piguénit displays a picture at a small exhibition in the city of Manchester. News of Piguénit's ability crosses the Atlantic as the artist receives an invitation to prepare and show his works at the Boston Exhibition planned for 1896

May – Hobart: the Tasmanian Art Gallery reopens on the 14th at a ceremony attended by the Governor and Lady Gormanston and long-time Piguénit patron the Tasmanian Premier James Agnew. Piguénit figures prominently in the gallery's collections. Meanwhile the premier remarks upon Piguénit's imminent departure for the United Kingdom and Europe announcing that the Tasmanian-born artist will be "returning home". Frewen Lord writing for England's *The Art Journal* offers muted praise for Piguénit's work in an otherwise anachronistic piece of imperialist diatribe

August – Launceston: Launceston Museum and Art Gallery Loans Exhibition – Page loans the Piguénit works that he purchased in Hobart during February; *Over the Hills and Far Away*, and *Geilston Bay, Looking up the Derwent*, and, *View from Beltana, Looking Down the River*. Also shown is the Wynne Prize winning *Out West, During the Flood, 1890*

September – Sydney: ASNSW Exhibition – trustees of NAGNSW purchase *Flood in the Darling* for £157 10s. Also on display *Low Tide*, and *Mount Kosciusko and the Valley of the Upper Murray*; *The First Gleam*, and, *A Tarn – Western Highlands of Tasmania*

October – Hobart: Art Society of Tasmania Exhibition: James Reid Scott loans *Mount Byron from Lake Petrarch* and another painting by Piguénit

October – Sydney: at the ASNSW meeting it is announced by the executors of the deceased estate of the late Richard Wynne that £1000 has been bequested for the provision of an annual prize in landscape painting in Australia to be known as the Wynne Prize. Although the prize was awarded for the first time in 1891 to Piguénit, this announcement establishes the Wynne Prize in perpetuity

1896

April – Launceston: in order to raise funds for a tour of the United Kingdom and the continent, Piguénit requests that a number of works currently on display in the Launceston Museum and Art Gallery are sold at auction by W. T. Bell and Co. Ltd. For sale is the Wynne Prize recipient; *An Autumn Sunset*; *The River Tamar, from Cataract Hill*; *A Coastal River, New South Wales*; *“Over the Hills and Far Away”*; *a View Near Campbell Town, New South Wales*; *View from Beltana*, and *View of Geilston Bay*

July – Sydney: unconfirmed reports of Piguénit paintings hung at an exhibition in Brighton, England

August – after an absence of two years Piguénit takes up an official position, as a committee member, of the ASNSW

September – Sydney: ASNSW Exhibition - *A Southern Headland, Tasmania* fetches £105 from the trustees of the NAGNSW. Also sold is *A Conversazione* for £10 10s; *The First Gleam* sold for £15 15s, and *The Wren’s Mirror* for £10 10s. Also shown is *Low Tide*, and *Mount Kosciusko and the Valley of the Upper Murray*.

1897

January – Hobart: courtesy of J. W. Beattie’s photographic studios, the *Tasmanian Mail* publishes reproductions of two Piguénit pictures, *The Frenchman’s Cap*, and, *The River Derwent, from the Queen’s Domain*

February – London: the *London Magazine of Art* heaps praise on Piguénit’s works shown at the last ASNSW Exhibition

April – Sydney: the trustees of the NAGNSW in negotiation with the TMAG establish a reciprocal agreement for the exchange of artworks. The first such instance is destined to be the opening of the enormous new main gallery at the AGNSW site on the Domain for which the eight Piguénit monochromes hung in Hobart will be loaned. A similar arrangement with Tasmania is being discussed with the trustees of the National Art Gallery of South Australia

May – Brisbane: Queensland International Exhibition – Piguénit shows *A Northern Lagoon* for which he receives a Class II award. Whilst in Queensland, Piguénit takes the opportunity to visit his nephew Fredrick George Piguénit, son of William’s brother Augustus George Piguénit

August – Hobart: Piguénit is cited during a parliamentary debate over the imposition of a twenty percent duty on works of art brought into the colony

August – Hobart: Piguénit loans *Low Tide* to the TMAG, thus helping the institution avoid paying the twenty percent duty on purchases

September – Sydney: ASNSW Exhibition – Piguénit shows three pictures, the prize-winning *A Northern Lagoon*; *Spring-time, North Ryde*, *Autumn Sunset*, *Balmain from Drummoyne*, and, *View from the Ryde Hills*

September – Sydney: ASNSW Exhibition - attended by trustees of NAGNSW. Piguénit is considered for the Wynne Prize by the trustees of the NAGNSW for his *Cloudland and Cliff, Southern Tasmania*. The trustees had originally purchased the painting which and then considered it for the Wynne Prize. *Cloudland* is destined for exhibition at the 1898 Exhibition of Australian Art in London. Between 1897 and 1928 there was no Wynne Prize Exhibition at the then National Art Gallery of New South Wales. The winners were selected by the Trustees from the local art society

show with works being brought into the gallery for assessment or, on occasions, works being viewed by the Trustees in other circumstances

December – Sydney: Piguénit, now on the reconstituted Board of Trustees of the NAGNSW, sits on a panel of judges deciding on works deemed appropriate for showing at a forthcoming exhibition held at Grafton Galleries, London. Over 500 pictures are eventually submitted for consideration

1898

January – Sydney: at the Royal Society of New South Wales “conversazione” Piguénit shows a drawing entitled *Mount Kosciusko and the Valley of the Upper Murray*

February – Hobart: Piguénit boards the *S.S. China* in Hobart bound for Europe. In March Piguénit leaves Australia for the first time at age 61. Piguénit work forms part of an exhibition of Australian works at Grafton Galleries, London funded jointly by private investment and by the trustees of the NAGNSW. In Piguénit’s possession are letters of introduction to British luminaries from Robert Mackenzie Johnstone and Tasmania’s Premier Sir Edward Braddon in which exchange for which Piguénit commits to giving a lecture illustrated with lantern slides of J. W. Beattie photographs of Tasmanian scenery

March – Hobart: news is received that the *S.S. China* has run aground on a promontory on the edge of the Red Sea at Perim Island enroute to England via the Suez Canal

April – England: Piguénit attends an exhibition of some of his finest works in the Australian Art section at Grafton Galleries, London. He sells five pictures for a total of £433. Three were sold to Henry Graves & Co., Pall Mall who made and sold many etchings of the pictures. Amongst the five paintings Piguénit sells are *A Northern Lagoon*; the Wynne Prize-winning *Cloud Land and Cliff, Southern Tasmania*; the NAGNSW owned *Flood in the Darling; After the Storm; Sunset after Rain – the Parramatta River, Sydney*, and, *The Break-O’-Day Plains, Tasmania*. Piguénit also carries with him official despatches from the Premier of Tasmania as the visit is also one where Piguénit will seek gifts or loans for the purchase of art works for the TMAG

May – Sydney: Piguénit’s illustrations appear in the *Sydney Mail*

December – Sydney: Piguénit returns from England

1899

March – Hobart: Piguénit is commissioned to paint a picture for Lady Emily Dobson who has left the colony for London. Lady Dobson played a central role in multiple political and charitable organisations as well as being the wife of former Premier of Tasmania Henry Dobson. The picture is entitled *The Derwent, from Mount Direction* and is shown before a private audience held by the Art Society of Tasmania at Anglesea Barracks

April – Hobart: the Art Society of Tasmania exhibits *The Derwent, from Mount Direction* to the public by subscription at the cost of 1 shilling to help pay for Piguénit’s commission

September – Sydney: ASNSW Exhibition: the fruits of Piguénit’s sojourn in the United Kingdom are on show, *An Autumn Sunset: View from Hampstead Heath, England* being his first publically-shown picture of an English landscape. He also shows, *An Autumn Morning, Lane Cove*; and, *An Australian Fjord*

1900

April - England and Wales: Aboard the *R.M.S. Australia* Piguénit embarks on second journey to United Kingdom, which includes a visit to north Wales. His primary reason for the journey is to sign artist’s proofs of engravings made of two English landscapes Piguénit painted and sold to Henry Graves and Co. Engravers and Etchers, London, during his previous visit

May – Launceston: Piguénit paintings are shown at the Maids of Cornwall Lodge Fair

August – Hobart: Art Society of Tasmania Exhibition – Piguénit is unrepresented due to his absence in the United Kingdom

December – Sydney: the ASNSW holds the first Commonwealth or Federal Exhibition. Piguénit's *An Australian Fjord* is exhibited for the second year running along with a new picture, *Early Morning on the Hawkesbury*, and, *Thy Gloomy Grandeur – Nature's Most August, Inspiring Aspect*

1901

January – Sydney: still in the United Kingdom, Piguénit writes to the curators of both the Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in Launceston and the TMAG in Hobart. Piguénit donates *Early Morning on the Hawkesbury* to the TMAG and *Low Tide* to the Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in Launceston

May – Hobart: Piguénit loans a monochromatic oil, *The Old Mill Stream, North Wales* to the TMAG in the hope that the picture will be purchased by the NAGNSW which it duly is for the sum of £31 10s

June – Sydney: the Duke and Duchess of York undertake a Royal tour of Australia. Whilst in Sydney the couple are presented with an album containing photographic reproductions of works by ASNSW members. Piguénit's contribution to the album is singular, that being, *St. Paul's Dome, from the South Esk, Tasmania*

June – Hobart: in preparation for the Tasmanian leg of the Royal tour, the TMAG loans its entire collection of Piguénit paintings to Government House including; *View on Lake St. Clair*; a view of the D'Entrecasteaux Channel; a view of Cape Raoul; *Headwaters of the Huon*; *A Bush Tram*, two views of the Derwent; *Fern Tree Bower*, *Source of the Derwent*; a view of Ben Lomond, *Early Morning on the Hawkesbury* (taken at the point where the Royal train was stopped on the journey from Queensland is incidentally damaged during the process), and the monochrome series *Mount Gell*; *King William Range*; *Mount Olympus*; *Murchison Valley*; *The Arthur Range*; *Lake Pedder*; *Hell's Gate*, and, *The Old Mill, North Wales*

September - Sydney: ASNSW Exhibition – in one room Piguénit shows the same three pictures he displayed at the ASNSW Exhibition two years earlier. But Piguénit also shows *Thunderstorm on the Darling* for which he is awarded the Wynne Prize by the trustees of the NAGNSW, for a second time. The trustees also purchase *The Mill Stream* at the exhibition. Also shown are monochromes of *A Welsh Moor*, and, *Beddgelert, North Wales*

September – Sydney: the *Australian Town and Country Journal* publishes a reproduction of *The Mill Stream* purchased by the NAGNSW

November – Adelaide: South Australia Society of Arts Federal Exhibition – Piguénit and other members of the Society of Artists exhibit some pictures

1902

June – Sydney: after bitter debate over government subsidies The Society of Artists and the ASNSW are amalgamated becoming the Royal Art Society of New South Wales

July – London: Piguénit is among a small group of artists who refuse the invitation made by the Royal Institute of Painters to show their paintings at the British Colonial Art Exhibition held in London

August – Sydney: Piguénit is commissioned by the trustees of the NAGNSW to paint Mount Kosciusko

September – Sydney: RASNSW Exhibition – full of confidence after recent successes Piguénit paints perhaps his largest and boldest work to date entitled *The Summit of the King William Range, Tasmania*. He also show a painting first shown in

May 1897 at the Brisbane Exhibition, the prize-winning *A Northern Lagoon*, and, *The Fisheries, River Darling (constructed by Aborigines)*, the title of which constitutes Piguénit's sole acknowledgement of Aboriginal people in his work

September – Hobart: a collection of three engravings taken from Piguénit's landscapes of scenes painted in England in 1898, *Beauteous Hampstead*; *The Royal River (a scene on the Thames)*, and, *The Hillside*, produced by Henry Graves and Co. Engravers and Etchers, London becomes available for purchase in Australia priced at 6 guineas each, including postage

1903

January – Hobart: two new pictures for the TMAG, *View of the Derwent, from the Old Beach*, and, *View of the Derwent, from Lindisfarne Bay*

March – Sydney: NAGNSW – *Mount Kosciusko* goes on display having been commissioned by the trustees in 1902. The trustees paid £200 to commission the painting

May – Hobart: Mr. Justice Page of Glenorchy loans to the TMAG *In the Gloaming*; *Mount Dromedary*, *River Derwent*, and *The Silvery Tide, Lane Cove*, all of which he had purchased in February 1895

September – Sydney: the newly-formed Royal Art Society of New South Wales, an amalgamation of the Society of Artists and the ASNSW, holds its annual exhibition where Piguénit shows *the Clouds Drop Fatness*, and, *An Autumn Sunset: Lane Cove River*. More works emerge from the Kosciusko district, *The Blue Lake*, and, *The Camping Ground* which sells to a private buyer for £10 10s

November – Toowoomba, Queensland: the Austral Association Festival committee invites Piguénit to exhibit in its arts section

1904

January – Bathurst, New South Wales: a private international exhibition is held by E. W. Christmas where Piguénit shows *Mount Kosciusko and the Valley of the Upper Murray*

March – Launceston: Piguénit's planned visit to Tasmania is cancelled due to illness. But in the meantime he paints for commission two pictures from old subjects. C. W. Joscelyne, the Launceston agent for George Fincham, the Melbourne organ builder, receives new versions of *Mount Byron*, *Lake Petrarch*, and *the Vale of Cuvier*, and, *Mount Olympus at Sunrise, with Lake St. Clair in the foreground*. Joscelyne loans the two pictures to the Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston

June – Sydney: John Sands, who conducted a series of private exhibitions of colonial art in the early 1880s, opens a new exhibition of Australian artists works. Piguénit shows his Wynne Prize winning *Thunderstorm on the Darling*; *A Western Pastoral* from 1892, and, *A Northern River*

September – Sydney: Piguénit is a finalist in the Wynne Prize with *A Camp on Snowy River*, but is unsuccessful

October – Launceston: Piguénit's third painting commissioned by Joscelyne is a view of the Third Basin, Cataract Gorge which Launceston's *Examiner* declares is either a copied or a traced and hand-coloured photograph

December – Launceston: Tasmania's *Weekly Courier* publishes a special Christmas edition which features a separate presentation copy, a photographic reproduction of Piguénit's *Mount Byron from Lake Petrarch* which he had painted for James Reid Scott in 1876

1905

May – Hobart: Justice Page, a long-time Piguénit benefactor sells all his paintings before leaving for London. In Burns' Auctioneers catalogue are; *Mount Direction from Glenorchy: After a Storm*; *The Coast of New South Wales Near Clifton, Illawarra*; *The Evening of Her Days*; *Mount Wellington at Sunrise from New Town*

Bay, as well as the prize winning collection *In the Gloaming*; *Mount Dromedary*, *River Derwent*, and, *The Silvery Tide, Lane Cove*

August – London: Graves & Sons, Etchers and Engravers commission Piguénit to produce three English scenes in oils, one on the upper Thames, one a picturesque spot near London, and one near Hampstead. On his return Piguénit presents three etchings of these paintings to the TMAG

September – Hobart: Piguénit, having received notice from Page regarding his impending departure for London and the sale of his Piguénit pictures, sends a shipment of new paintings from Sydney for sale on application, namely; *The Glenorchy Hills, from the Flank of Mount Direction at Sunrise*; *Bedlam Walls*; *The Derwent, from Brown's River Road*; *Mount Wellington, from O'Brien's Bridge*, and, *Lane Cove, Sydney*. A similar sale takes place in Sydney

September – Sydney: Piguénit is again a finalist in the Wynne Prize with *Ravines, Snowy River Mountains, N.S.W* but is again unsuccessful

October – Launceston: Piguénit paints another commission for C. W. Joscelyne, the product of his unfortunate stay in the port of Aden, on the Red Sea, entitled *Suez Canal Scene – Lake Menzalah*

October – Hobart: local barrister and solicitor M. W. Simmons receives a pair of studies painted by Piguénit during his time in Wales; *A Welsh River, North Wales*, and, *The Conway, near Beth-y-coed*

1906

April – Launceston: another commission for C. W. Joscelyne, *When the Glow is in the West*, and a study of northeast Tasmania entitled *Clearing Weather*

April – Sydney: more of Piguénit's work goes to auction. This time it is a picture painted ten years ago that never sold entitled *Sydney in 1882, from North Shore, showing Garden Palace, Destroyed by Fire, 22 September 1882*

May – Sydney: at John Sands' Gallery, George Street, Piguénit shows more works from the Kosciuszko sojourn, a highly-unfamiliar view of the "Roof of Australia" from the south-east, also, *The Ravines in the Snowy Mountains*; *Among the Mangroves*; *Conway, North Wales*, and, *Where the Lillies Grow*, and finally another version of *The Blue Lake*

September – Sydney: ASNSW Exhibition

1907

January – Launceston: the Launceston Industrial Exhibition shows eight Piguénit monochromes loaned by MLC G. T. Collins

March – Hobart: Piguénit's long-time friend W. V. Legge visits an increasingly reclusive Piguénit in his Hunter's Hill studio. Upon his return to Hobart Legge writes to the registrar of the TMAG suggesting it lobby government for funds to purchase a painting to add to the gallery's collection

October – Launceston: C. W. Joscelyne exhibits *A Northern River, New South Wales*; *Cullenswood Village, Tasmania*; *River Scene with Cattle, Tasmania*; *St. Paul's Dome, from the South Esk*, and a collection of Tasmanian east coast scenes at his premises

November – Adelaide: the South Australian Society of the Arts hosts the Federal Art Exhibition – in a rare display outside of Tasmania or New South Wales Piguénit shows the Wynne Prize winner *Thunderstorm on the Darling*, and *On the Conway, North Wales*

December – Sydney: Piguénit watercolour *St. Paul's Dome, from the South Esk*, and, *Evening, Hunter's Hill* are sold as Professor Liverside departs for England

- 1908**
- March** – Hobart: the TMAG hosts a large exhibition of pictures by Pigenit which before sending the display forward to the Franco-British exhibition. The collection features no new work; *On the Conway, North Wales*; *A Northern River, New South Wales*; while Pigenit revives an old favourite subject from 25 years earlier in *Lake St. Clair: Source of the Derwent*, the still unsold Wynne Prize picture from 1901, *A Thunderstorm in the Darling*; *A Western Pastoral*; *Among the Mangroves*, and, *An Australian Mangrove*.
- May** - London: Franco-British Exhibition - exhibits all of the pictures just seen at the TMAG. Given that the display is to be hung in the Tasmanian Court of the exhibition under the watchful eye of Agent-General for Tasmania in London Alfred Dobson, it is remarkable that there is only one Tasmanian scene featured, the rest being New South Wales scenes. Pigenit fails to win a prize at the exhibition, whilst his sister Harriet is awarded a bronze medal for her wallpapers
- November** – Launceston: two more commissions for Joscelyne; a view of *The Butts of Ben Lomond*, and, a view of the Cora Lynn Bridge from the North Esk
- 1909**
- April** – Launceston: Joscelyne lends five pictures to the Victoria museum and Art Gallery for an exhibition of Pigenit's work
- May** – Hobart: having failed to sell a single picture at the Franco-British Exhibition Pigenit places the pictures including *Thunderstorm* with Burns and Co. Auctioneers although for private sale
- August** – Sydney: the Mitchell Library, from the bequest of David Scott Mitchell, opens on Macquarie Street. Pigenit is among the many artists whose works are held in the collection
- September** – Sydney: Royal Art Society of New South Wales Exhibition – the NAGNSW owned *Mount Kosciusko* is shown
- November** – Hobart: Pigenit is invited to join The Allied Artists Association and The Imperial Arts League, both of London
- 1910**
- March** – Hobart: at Burns and Sons, a view of the La Perouse Range, from the D'Entrecasteaux Channel, Tasmania is offered for sale
- April** – Hobart: Art Society of Tasmania: Pigenit shows *Autumn Sunset, Lane Cove River*, and, *Autumn Morning, Lane Cove River*, both older pictures from 1899 and some watercolours made in Wales in 1901. A newer picture entitled *Camp Creek, Illawarra, N.S.W.*, is sold
- September** – Sydney: in Pigenit's fourth and final attempt to win the Wynne Prize with *The Grose Valley* he is beaten by William Lister Lister
- 1911**
- May** – Hobart: Pigenit pictures auctioned at Burns and Sons
- October** – Sydney: James R. Lawson and Little have around twenty Pigenit pictures available for purchase at an upcoming auction. Some titles are; *A Welsh Forest North Wales*; *Near Liverpool, New South Wales*; *The Flood of 1890: River Darling*; *When the Glow is in the West*
- November** – Launceston: C. W. Joscelyne passes away. He is noted as having acted as an agent for Pigenit having purchased the artists paintings, exhibited them in public art galleries and then having sold them for profit
- 1912**
- August** - New York: America's *Time* magazine founded in 1883 publishes an article about Pigenit by William Moore
- 1913**
- June** – Sydney: Lawson and Little offer more Pigenit pictures for sale

December – Hobart: the TMAG takes down most of its works by Piguénit whereupon they occupy and otherwise blank wall near the old Davey Street entrance

December – Sydney: the NAGNSW displays some etchings from pictures Piguénit made fifteen years ago in England and forwarded from Henry Graves and Co. Etchers and Engravers, London

1914

June – Sydney: the Chris Bennett collection which includes Piguénit pictures goes on display in Lawson & Little's new gallery in Castlereagh Street

17 July – Hunter's Hill, NSW: William Charles Piguénit passes away following complication arising from an appendix operation

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